

Russia said delaying deal on ending arms to Iran

WASHINGTON (R) — Russia is dragging its feet on completing an agreement reached by Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin last year under which Moscow would end arms sales to Iran, senior U.S. officials say.

The issue is expected to be raised by Secretary of State Warren Christopher when he meets his Russian counterpart in Geneva on Jan. 17 and 18.

But the crisis in the break-away Russian region of Chechnya is likely to interfere with any quick resolution, one senior U.S. official said in an interview.

"I think all of this complicates the kinds of steps that Yeltsin and (Prime Minister Viktor) Chernomyrdin and (Foreign Minister Andrei) Kozhevnikov are trying to take in terms of bringing their policies into conformity with those of the other countries," the official said of the fighting between the Russian army and Chechen rebels.

After his summit with Mr. Clinton in Washington last September, Mr. Yeltsin publicly acknowledged a private commitment to end future arms sales to Iran, which the United States considers a sponsor of terrorism and has worked hard to isolate.

But Mr. Yeltsin asserted he would still carry out the terms of a 1998 weapons deal with Iran, arguing that Russia, as a "respectable, great power cannot fail to honour this contract."

U.S. officials, having little other choice, acceded to this compromise. But in the past three months there has been little progress in bringing the agreement to completion, even though Mr. Yeltsin said he hoped it would be done soon.

One official said that Moscow has failed to disclose critical details of past contracts with Iran and "until we know what's in those past contracts we don't have a final resolution."

"What if it (remaining contract obligations) were billions of dollars. That's not really much of a deal," he said.

The administration wants to know the exact amount of weapons still to be transferred to Iran and a date by which the transfers will be completed.

The difficulty in obtaining this information suggests that even though Mr. Yeltsin has publicly promised to halt arms sales to Iran "there's probably still a debate going on (in Moscow) as to whether this was the right thing for the Russians to do," the official said.

The lead officials on this matter are Vice President Al Gore and Mr. Chernomyrdin but Under Secretary of State Lynn Davis also had talks in Moscow last month. Mr. Christopher will discuss a range of issues — including arms sales to Iran — when he meets Mr. Kozhevnikov in Geneva this month.

With the end of the cold war and the Soviet Union's collapse, Russia's international arms sales business has plummeted, leaving Iran one of the former superpower's only weapons clients.

In recent years, Russian sales to Tehran have included advanced MiG-29 and Sukhoi SU-24 warplanes, T-72 tanks and two diesel-powered Kilo-class submarines.

The United States has barred Russia from becoming a founding member of a new export control body unless it halts arms sales to Iran.

Other leading countries in the group — Britain, France and Germany — wanted to admit Russia right away and have resisted implementing the control plan before Russia became a party, U.S. officials said.

James Woolsey, before his resignation as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, recently predicted that Iran could possess a nuclear bomb in eight to 10 years or sooner if it received significant foreign assistance.

The New York Times said on Thursday that American and Israeli officials believe Iran is much closer to producing an atomic weapon than previously thought, maybe less than five years.



GEAGEA IN COURT: Two Lebanese soldiers guard the former Lebanese warlord Samir Gagea in the room court in Beirut during his trial for assassination of Christian leader Dani Chamoun and his family (see page 12) (AFP photo)

Beirut: No compromise on SLA

BEIRUT (R) — The Lebanese government is determined to jail members of a pro-Israeli militia in South Lebanon when it regains control of the south, Defence Minister Mohsen Dalloul was quoted on Saturday as saying.

"Of course anyone dealing with the enemy is an agent and should be prosecuted," Mr. Dalloul told the Beirut daily Al Safir.

His statement was the toughest so far by a government minister on the fate of the 3,000-strong South Lebanon Army (SLA) once Israel withdraws from the south.

The SLA has helped Israeli occupation troops control a 15-kilometre wide border strip in South Lebanon since its creation in 1985. It often clashes with guerrillas trying to drive the Israelis out of Lebanon.

But independent observers in the south say the SLA is growing increasingly ineffective and subject to desertions as its fighters worry about their fate when peace comes.

Israel has repeatedly demanded that Lebanon absorb the SLA into its army but Mr. Dalloul told Al Safir he had personally rejected appeals for special treatment for the force which is recruited among Christian and Shi'ite Muslim inhabitants of the occupation zone.

"A while back I made contacts... regarding their (the SLA's) fate and it was said that their fate is jail, without compromise," he said.

"They tried to make us give a promise that we would reconsider their fate, but we were adamant they are agents and there is no escape from prosecution," Mr. Dalloul added.

He did not indicate with whom he held the conversation but it appeared to have been either the Israelis or U.S. officials who have mediated in peace negotiations between Israel, Lebanon and Syria.

Independent observers in the south say the SLA's strength has dropped from about 3,800 at its peak to 2,800 due to concerns among its fighters about the future.

Its growing ineffectiveness has exposed Israeli troops to increasing attacks by the Islamic resistance headed by pro-Iranian Hizbullah (Party of God) guerrillas who killed 21 Israeli soldiers and wounded scores during 1994.

Saudi under death sentence in Jordan held in U.S., seeks review of his case

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Saudi Arabian national sentenced to death in absentia in a subversion case in Jordan and now in U.S. detention in an unrelated charge is seeking to present his version of the case to the judicial authorities in the Kingdom, lawyers said Saturday.

Mohammad Jamal Khalifa was among 11 people who were given the death penalty after a four-month trial at the State Security Court last month.

Mr. Khalifa — said to be the son-in-law of Osama Ben Laden, a Saudi millionaire of Yemeni origin and allegedly the bankroller of extremist groups in several Arab countries — and two others, an Omani and a Jordanian, were handed down the sentence in absentia.

The case involved a group of people nicknamed "Arab Afghans," a reference to some of its members' backgrounds as volunteers who fought against the Soviet army in the 1980-90 war in Afghanistan.

The group was accused of plotting and carrying out bomb attacks in public places and planning to assassinate Jordanian and Palestinian peace negotiators with Israel.

Seven of the 25 people originally charged were acquitted; 11 were given the death sentence and seven others were jailed for terms ranging between 7½ years to life imprisonment.

Samir Hussein, a Jordanian lawyer, said he was contacted by a U.S. lawyer, acting on behalf of Mr. Khalifa, who was arrested in San Francisco about a month ago on charges of violating American immigration laws.

Mr. Hussein said he told the lawyer that Mr. Khalifa's case could not be taken up in Jordan as long as he was not present in the Kingdom.

"Under Jordanian law, anyone convicted in absentia needs to be present in Jordan for his or her case to be reviewed," said Mr. Hussein. "Once the convicted surrenders or is arrested by Jordanian authorities, then the verdict against him or her is automatically annulled and a retrial is ordered."

As such, Mr. Hussein said he advised his American counterpart that Mr. Khalifa, who is travelling on a Saudi passport, present himself in Jordan and face the charges against him in a retrial.

Reports in the Arabic-language press in Europe said Mr. Khalifa, who lived in the Philippines and ran a Muslim religious centre there for several years, was under investigation by American law-enforcement agencies for possible links with "terrorist organisations."

The formal charge against him in San Francisco, however, is of making a false statement in his visa application form that there were no criminal charges pending against him anywhere in the world. The statement was made when he was under indictment in Jordan in the "Arab Afghan" case, according to the report.

In the "Arab Afghan" case, it was reported that Abdullah Hashaka, said to be the mastermind behind the group, had visited the Philippines and met with Mr. Khalifa who extended him help to set up clandestine operations against the state in Jordan. It was not known whether Mr. Khalifa had ever been in Jordan.

Mr. Khalifa is reported to have flown to the U.S. after the Philippine government launched an investigation into the religious centre he

was running and other Muslim organisations suspected of financing Muslim dissidents waging a guerrilla war against the state.

Heads of several Muslim organisations were arrested, including at least two who hold Jordanian passports, reports from Manila said. Some of the arrested were released, but the precise status of the two Jordanian passport holders was not immediately known.

Abdullah Khalifa, a brother of Mohammad's, is reportedly visiting Jordan to pursue the effort to have his brother face the charges in the Kingdom. He could not be reached for comment.

Sources said Jordan had not filed a request to Washington for Mr. Khalifa's extradition to the Kingdom. They said two Jordanian judges who negotiated a draft extradition treaty with the U.S. did not discuss any case in particular with their American counterparts.

But, the sources said it was possible that Jordan might seek to bring Mr. Khalifa to justice in the Kingdom after the extradition treaty is formalised. The formalisation of the treaty is expected soon.

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Paris incurs allies' wrath over warming to Baghdad

PARIS (R) — France has incurred the wrath of its 1991 Gulf war allies for receiving a senior Iraqi leader for the first time since the conflict and announcing it would reestablish a diplomatic foothold in Baghdad.

Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said after a lengthy breakfast with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz that Paris would open an interest section at the Romanian embassy in Iraq very soon.

Paris's gesture drew swift and sharp criticism from the United States, which led an international force against Iraq in the Gulf war, and Britain.

The high-profile thaw between Paris and Baghdad was overshadowed by a defiant speech by President Saddam Hussein hailing the "mother of battles," as Iraq called the war in which a U.S.-led coalition drove its invasion forces out of Kuwait.

Mr. Juppe said his 80-minute meeting with President Saddam's longtime right-hand man covered the situation in Iraq and Baghdad's implementation of U.N. resolutions arising from its ill-fated 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Some progress has been made over the past months, more remains to be done," Mr. Juppe, who previously met Mr. Aziz in New York four months ago, told reporters.

Reacting to the announcement of the interest section, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelly said: "We do not believe that this is a timely action. We don't consider the particular decision to be helpful or constructive."

The United States is the only major Western country with an interest section in Baghdad.



Iraqi Vice-Prime Minister Tariq Aziz (left) listens as French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe speaks with reporters in Paris on Friday (AFP photo)

In London, a British Foreign Office spokesman faulted France, which has just taken over the presidency of the European Union: "No other member state has reestablished in Baghdad in this way."

"We remain very suspicious of the Iraqi regime's intentions in the wake of the events last October. It is not the moment to relax pressure on Iraq to comply fully with U.N. requirements," he said.

France advocates a gradual easing of the U.N. oil embargo to reward Iraq for recognising Kuwait's borders and complying with disarmament resolutions. But Mr. Juppe was cagey about prospects of a move to ease sanctions when the Security Council reviews the issue later this month.

He endorsed Mr. Aziz's call for a "legalistic implementation" of the resolutions and said France wanted to break the deadlock.

"A deadlocked situation does not benefit anyone. We must move forward," he said.

The Security Council is due to review in January, March and April reports of the U.N. Special Commission supervising Baghdad's compliance with resolutions demanding the elimination of its mass destruction weapons.

Mr. Aziz said Iraq was cooperating fully with the U.N. Special Commission. "But the Security Council must in return make a positive move towards... a softening of sanctions against Iraq in keeping with a fair and legalistic interpretation of the council's resolutions," he said.

He called the council's interpretation of the resolutions as "abusive and arbitrary," adding: "Iraq's legitimate rights must be respected in keeping with the text of the resolutions and the rules of international law."

Mr. Aziz welcomed the opening of a French diplomatic mission in Baghdad as making it easier to discuss bilateral questions and the implementation of U.N. resolutions. Iraq already has an interest section in Paris.

France was one of Iraq's major arms suppliers and trading partners during the 1980s and is still owed an estimated several billion dollars by Baghdad.

Mr. Juppe was cautious not to appear too friendly to Mr. Aziz, only shaking his hand out of view of television cameras.

Iran chief-of-staff rules out sabotage in air crash

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's chief-of-staff was quoted on Saturday as saying a plane crash which killed Iran's air force commander along with four generals was caused by a technical failure, ruling out sabotage.

General Ali Shahbazi told Salam newspaper: "It is completely clear to us that the plane crash was solely caused by technical failure. But as usual, the experts were dispatched to the site for precise review of the case."

Tehran Radio on Friday said the plane carrying air force commander, Brigadier General Mansour Sattari, and his senior aides crashed on Thursday night when it tried to land at Isfahan in central Iran after developing technical problems.

Other victims of the crash were two colonels, a major, a captain and three lieutenants.

Gen. Shahbazi told the radio on Friday that the radio had taken off in a Lockheed C-140 Jetstar from Isfahan's Shahid Bahaei air base for a destination he did not specify.

Local newspapers said on Saturday that at about 2,000 feet altitude the aircraft reported a change in cabin air pressure and requested an emergency landing back at Isfahan.

"In trying to do so the technical failure developed and the plane caught fire and crashed," Salam newspaper said.

When asked why so many senior officers were on the same plane despite "past bitter experience," Gen. Shahbazi said: "The reason is only efforts on the part of officials in saving facilities."

The plane crash was the second since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution to cause the death of an air force chief and senior officers.

The Iranian army meanwhile opened an investigation into the latest plane crash.

Although "technical difficulty" has been cited as the cause of the crash, the authorities sent a team of experts to the scene.

The plane was on a flight from Isfahan to Tehran, but it turned back shortly after take-off because of "technical difficulties," the official Iranian news agency IRNA said.

IRNA said Friday that the plane had caught fire before crash-landing.

Before the crash, Sattari and his aides took part in a gathering of army commanders in the southern island of Kish, IRNA said. On their way to Tehran, they decided to attend a ceremony for air

force pilots at the base.

They left for the capital two hours later and when the plane reached an altitude of 2,000 feet, the pilot noticed "changes" inside the cockpit and tried to make an emergency landing.

Political observers said the incident had dealt a severe blow to the Iranian military devastating the top ranks of the air force, already badly damaged during the 1980-1988 war against Iraq.

The bodies of the victims were transferred to Tehran on Friday and a funeral is to be held Sunday in front of an air force base in the capital.

They are to be buried at Behesht-e Zahra cemetery in southern Tehran after prayers at the nearby mausoleum of the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Sattari, who served in the

air force under the Shah before the 1979 revolution, commanded Iran's air defences in the war with Iraq.

The air force commander visited the former Soviet Union, China and North Korea where he signed large contracts to buy military equipment, including MiG-29 aircraft.

Gen. Hassan Firouz-Abadi, chief of staff for Iran's armed forces, presented his condolences to Iran's leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran's IRNA news agency named the four brigadier generals killed along with Sattari as: Chief of Air Force Staff Alireza Yassini, Deputy Commander for Operations Mostafa Ardestani, head of the engineering department Ahmad Shojaei, and head of the controller department Hassan Razaqani.

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel: 7311-11-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Pollards
17:30 Que Le Mielier Gagne
18:30 Montaigne
18:30 Les Intermittents
19:30 News in French
19:30 Ushuaia
19:30 Galactica
20:15 The Album Show
21:30 Hidden Room
21:30 Heartbeat
22:30 News in English
22:30 The Upper Hand

PRAYER TIMES
05:10 Fajr
06:32 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:40 Dhur
14:20 'Asr
16:51 Maghrib
18:13 Isha

CHURCHES
St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Switzerland, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624900
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terraviva Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assunta International Church Tel. 625226
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 625226
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684192
The Latter-day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675891
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Temperatures are expected to drop slightly with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 5/15
Aqaba 11/23
Deserts 4/16
Jordan Valley 11/21

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 15, Aqaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 54 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Hisham Karim 790286
Dr. Jamal Jbari 847351
Dr. Walid Maen 675485
Dr. Abdul Wahid Awad 846070
First pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairouki pharmacy 626762
Al Salem pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shameibani pharmacy 637660
Nairouki pharmacy 626762
Najib pharmacy 847632

ERBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu
Alquds pharmacy
ZARQA:
Dr. Raouda Shabin 982799
Khalifah pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 630341
Rescue 129
Rescue Police: 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Price Complaints 605800
Water and Sewerage 661176
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 843402
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority
Electric Power Company 815615
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 81381/332
Khalidi Maternity, J. Ann 642441/2
Alkhalid Maternity, J. Ann 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mallat, J. Amman 636140
Pelletier, Smeisani 6641714
Shamsani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Munshar Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/57
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 773111/26
Army, Marfa 86235
Queen Alia Hospital 89161/115
Amal Hospital 672402/50
Amal Hospital 674135
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)893323
The Al Nahda Hospital 661176
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)905560
Al-Haram Hospital (09)986732
Al-Haram Modern Hospital (09)989990
ERBID:
Princess Beata Hospital (02)755555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)722225
The Al Nahda Hospital (02)97100
AQABA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)893323
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)905560
Al-Haram Hospital (09)986732
Al-Haram Modern Hospital (09)989990
FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) International Airport at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (09)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
05:30 Bangkok (RJ)
06:25 Aqaba (RJ)
06:30 Beirut (RJ)
06:30 Frankfurt (RJ)
11:25 Athens (RJ)
11:30 Aqaba, Vienna (add) (RJ)
11:40 Rome (RJ)
11:45 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:50 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:50 Athens (RJ)
12:40 Rome (add) (RJ)
12:45 Rome (add) (RJ)
12:45 Dhahran (RJ)
12:45 Vienna (add) (RJ)
12:45 Beirut (RJ)
12:45 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
12:45 London (RJ)
12:45 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
12:45 Athens (RJ)
12:45 Frankfurt (RJ)
12:45 Vienna (add) (RJ)
12:45 Vienna (RJ)
12:45 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
12:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
12:45 Rome (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
12:45 Aqaba (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
07:10 Rome (A2)
07:45 Beirut (A2)
12:30 Doha, Muscat (CF)
12:45 Moscow (SU)
21:30 Cairo (MS)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
05:30 Aqaba (RJ)
06:25 Beirut (RJ)
06:30 Frankfurt (RJ)
11:25 Athens (RJ)
11:30 Aqaba, Vienna (add) (RJ)
11:40 Rome (RJ)
11:45 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:50 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:50 Athens (RJ)
12:40 Rome (add) (RJ)
12:45 Rome (add) (RJ)
12:45 Dhahran (RJ)
12:45 Vienna (add) (RJ)
12:45 Beirut (RJ)
12:45 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
12:45 London (RJ)
12:45 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
12:45 Athens (RJ)
12:45 Frankfurt (RJ)
12:45 Vienna (add) (RJ)
12:45 Vienna (RJ)
12:45 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
12:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
12:45 Rome (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
12:45 Aqaba (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
07:10 Rome (A2)
07:45 Beirut (A2)
12:30 Doha, Muscat (CF)
12:45 Moscow (SU)
21:30 Cairo (MS)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN
Dep. Amman 5:50 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:50 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:50 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES
Upplower price in lbs per kg.

Apple 700/400
Banana 680
Beetroot (Mokkamar) 620
Cabbage 200/150
Carrot 280/200
Cauliflower 280/200
Cucumbers (large) 200/150
Cucumbers (small) 320/200
Eggplant 320/200
Garlic 420/200
Grape Fruit 240/140
Lemon 270/160
Marrow (large) 150/120
Marrow (small) 340/220
Onion (green) 300/200
Onion (dry) 350/280
Orange 550/300
Pepper (hot) 540/300
Pepper (sweet) 600/400
Potato 320/200
Radish 220/120
Spinach 260/180
String Beans 850/600
Tomato 400/200

Treasurer of French coalition party indicted for corruption

PARIS (Agencies) — The treasurer of the Republican Party in France's governing right-wing coalition, Jean-Pierre Thomas, has been indicted on corruption charges over illegal party financing, a reliable source said Saturday.

Mr. Thomas, who was questioned Friday by Paris magistrate Mireille Filippini, was the first person indicted in the investigation into alleged illegal funding of the Republican Party, the second biggest faction in the government of Prime Minister Edouard Balladur.

Gerard Longuet, the former industry minister and a founding member of the Republican Party, was forced to resign from the cabinet in October after coming under investigation in the same case and also for allegedly underpaying for construction of a holiday residence on the Riviera.

The indictment of Mr. Thomas is a new blow for Mr. Balladur as the Republican Party is considered a key ally in his expected run for the French presidency in elections this April and May.

In addition to Mr. Longuet, two ministers from Mr. Balladur's neo-Gaullist Rally For the Republic (RPR) party, the biggest group in the coalition, have been forced to resign after being indicted for corruption.

The sources said Mr. Thomas was charged on several counts involving fraud and kickbacks, notably over what court records said was a "suspect" sum of 28 million francs (about \$5.2 million) that fed the party coffers from 1987 to 1991.

Mr. Thomas' lawyer, Bernard Bigault du Grandrut, refused to comment Saturday, citing court secrecy laws.

Mr. Balladur, who is expected to formally announce his candidature for president later this month, has a clear lead in opinion polls, ahead

of both his likely RPR rival Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac and all potential leftwing candidates.

But Mr. Longuet and the two other ministers forced to resign were all key supporters of Mr. Balladur over Mr. Chirac and a further weakening of the Republican Party could undermine the prime minister's campaign plans.

The Republican Party first came under investigation for alleged illegal financing last March, and the party's Paris headquarters were searched on court orders in early November.

The source said Saturday that Judge Filippini held off until November to indict Mr. Thomas, who is also a deputy, because the National Assembly is on holiday recess until Jan. 9 and so it was not necessary to first obtain the lifting of its parliamentary immunity.

Some of the firms named in connection with the Republican Party financing probe include COGEDIM, one of France's biggest property development companies, and the French Radiotelephone Society, SFR, a subsidiary of the Compagnie Generale des Eaux, a private utility and communications giant.

Mr. Balladur's two other cabinet members forced to resign in recent months were former development aid minister Michel Rossin and ex-Communications Minister Alain Carignon.

Both Mr. Longuet and Mr. Rossin, who resigned in November, are under investigation for allegedly underpaying for homes they own at chic Riviera resorts. Mr. Longuet is also being probed for allegedly financing his party via an off-shore account.

Mr. Carignon, who is also mayor of the southeastern city of Grenoble, resigned in July. He was indicted on corruption charges in connection

with alleged illegal financing of his election campaigns, notably through kickbacks from the awarding of Grenoble city water contracts.

The Balladur government tried last month to remove a key judge investigating alleged illegal financing of the RPR — in what was seen as an attempt to limit political fallout from the probes threatening conservative politicians ahead of the presidential election.

But Socialist President Francois Mitterrand, who is locked in a power-sharing arrangement with Mr. Balladur until the end of his mandate, intervened to seek a ruling on the matter from the country's top judicial watchdog body.

The move will delay any action against the judge, Eric Halphen, possibly until after the presidential election.

Mr. Mitterrand, stricken with cancer, said Friday he would serve out his last four months in office but leave "without remorse or regrets".

In a nearly two-hour philosophical musing on the joys and limits of power, Mr. Mitterrand told a New Year press reception he was proud to have been the first Socialist ruler to endure in French history, even if that had meant choosing the market economy over pure socialism.

"When I leave, it will be without remorse or regrets. I will even be a little relieved because a certain fatigue sets in with age and time," he said.

He declined to comment on who would succeed him, saying he would be happy if it were a fellow Socialist but there were signs that this might not be the case.

The 78-year-old president, due to complete 14 years in office in May, said the difficult and important decision he had taken was in 1983 when he chose European

monetary discipline and an open economy over pursuing his Socialist economic policy.

"There was no choice. Either I followed Lenin's policy — and I had the advantage of knowing how that ends — or else I was obliged to pursue a policy of compromise," he recalled.

By pegging the franc to the deutsche mark after three devaluations and imposing austerity after a period of social free-spending, Mr. Mitterrand said he had ensured that socialism would be synonymous with sound government, not bankruptcy.

"What is marvellous about power is that it enables you to affect things and people, although not as much as is said," he reflected.

Among the limits, the president cited the power of international currency speculators who could move more money in a day than the Bank of France held in its reserves.

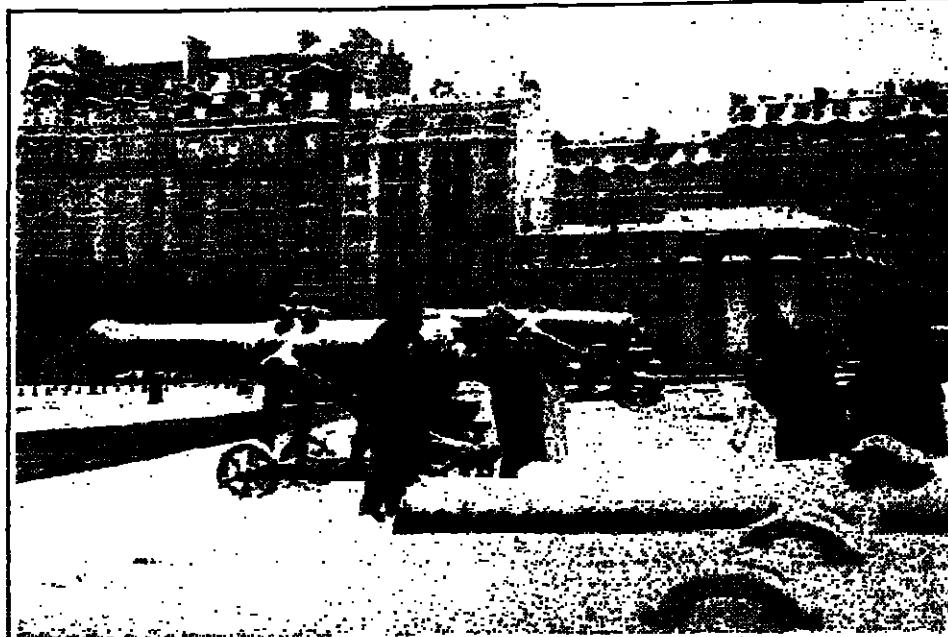
"Power isn't what people think. The president of the Fifth Republic has much less power than is imagined, although more than most other democratic leaders," he said.

Among his personal achievements, Mr. Mitterrand cited the abolition of the death penalty and state security courts and progress in civil liberties and freedom of expression.

He also cited major architecture projects, including the Louvre Museum Pyramid, the grand arch of La Defense, the Bastille Opera House and a new National Library that have altered the face of Paris.

The president said he had had to defend them tooth and nail against Socialist finance ministers who wanted to cut the budget and had accused him of a "prince's whims".

"I told them: 'You will never have an architecture policy if you make cuts all the time,'" he said.



FRENCH SNOWED IN: Tourists take snowfalls causing traffic jams in areas pictures of themselves by canons at the Hotel throughout the country, the national road Des Invalides in Paris. Winter swooped in on information centre said (AFP photo). France early Friday with heavy overnight

S. Africa to hold state funeral for Slovo

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa's late Communist leader Joe Slovo will be given a state funeral, President Nelson Mandela said Saturday, announcing an official day of mourning as tributes poured in.

Mr. Slovo died of cancer Friday aged 68, in Johannesburg.

"Comrade Joe Slovo's funeral will be accorded the highest possible status by the government so that this hero of the South African people is bid farewell in a fitting manner," Mr. Mandela told reporters.

The day of the burial will be an official day of mourning, and flags will fly at half-mast in Pretoria, Cape Town, Johannesburg and elsewhere. The funeral will take place, as well as the capitals of all the provinces.

Mr. Slovo, a Lithuanian-born anti-apartheid fighter, was housing minister in South Africa's first democratic government.

"Personally, I had known Comrade Joe for more than three decades both as a close friend and colleague, at university as a fellow student, as a fearless colleague in the

underground, as one of the founders of our military wing and a close confidante," Mr. Mandela said.

"His departure is a loss to the nation, the government, the ANC, South African Communist Party, and the rest of the democratic movement and it is a loss to me personally."

Mr. Slovo was national chairman of the SACP and the first white member of the executive of Mr. Mandela's African National Congress which won power in all-race elections last April.

Tributes poured in from many South Africans.

Former president and now Deputy President F.W. de Klerk said he had respected the Communist leader as an astute negotiator.

During negotiations over democracy with the white government and other parties, Mr. Slovo broke the logjam by suggesting a "sun-set clause" in which there would be power-sharing in South Africa until 1999. The clause was the brainchild of the current government of national unity.

Zulu leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi said: "Although our views were diametrically

opposed to each other and in a sense we were political enemies for decades, I had great respect for his honesty."

Kwazulu-Natal ANC leader Jacob Zuma said Mr. Slovo had epitomised non-racialism.

"He made a great contribution in negotiations. He was part of the ANC leadership who analysed a complex situation to emerge with almost a miracle. He epitomised non-racialism and made an outstanding contribution to this country. He is a great loss," Mr. Zuma said.

"South Africa will be all the poorer for Joe Slovo's passing," the weekend Star newspaper said in an editorial.

The Citizen newspaper, which supported the former apartheid government, said it had been saddened by the death of Mr. Slovo.

The SACP said his death was a loss for the whole country.

"We mourn the loss of our leader. He brought to our liberation movement and our party a rigorous intellect, a strong sense of realism and a sharp wit," the Communist Party said.

Thousands gather for Elvis' 60th birthday party

MEMPHIS, Tennessee (R) — Thousands of die-hard Elvis Presley fans poured into Memphis at the beginning of a three-day celebration of the 60th anniversary of the birth of the king of rock n' roll.

The festival, though not as large as the Elvis week celebration in August which marks the entertainer's death in 1977, is expected to draw at least 10,000 Elvis fans. Among those not attending are Lisa Marie Presley-Jackson, daughter of the rock star, and her mother, Priscilla Presley.

"They usually don't come here for the birthday celebration," said David Beckwith, a spokesman for Elvis Presley Enterprises.

"These (fans) are the die-hards and I think more will be here this year because of the significance of the 60th." Hundreds of foreign tourists, mostly fan clubs, are in town from Denmark, Germany, Britain and Australia. To honour the singer, Felix De Weldon, the artist who sculptured the two Jimi moments in Washington, D.C., has created a commemorative bust of Presley to be presented to the late singer's estate Sunday.

A local hotel has designed a special birthday cake for the public Sunday, and singer Ronnie McDowell will perform Elvis tunes with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. Although more than a dozen other public events are scheduled, the main event will be a ceremony at Graceland, the late singer's mansion, Sunday.

Universe vs. World in India's cola war

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's two international beauty queens, Miss Universe, Sushmita Sen, and Miss World, Aishwarya Rai, are set to do battle in India's cola war.

Coca Cola has signed Sushmita Sen to pitch the soft drink in India, Asian Age newspaper reported Friday, in a bid to upstage rival Pepsi, which uses Aishwarya Rai for its advertising here. The 21-year-old Sen is scheduled to fly to Bombay Saturday to pose for Coca Cola advertisements. Rai has already appeared in television spots for Pepsi.

Star TV breaks into Singapore with pop videos

HONG KONG (AFP) — Star TV said that it would supply eight hours of music video programming a week to Singapore, under an agreement signed with Television Corp. of Singapore.

"The six-month deal is a source of pride... since the Star TV satellite signal is not accessible in Singapore," the pan-Asian satellite broadcaster, controlled by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. Ltd., said a statement. No value was disclosed for the arrangement.

6 footed, 6 testicled calf born in Argentina

CHACO, Argentina (AFP) — A cow has given birth to a calf with six feet, two tails and six testicles, the proud owner said Friday. "He is in good health and is moving around normally," said Loeve, a cattle rancher in Chaco, who said the baby bovine was walking on four of his six feet and that the other two dangled from its hunches. Mr. Loeve said he intended to give the calf to the zoo in Chaco.

China nabs 4, recovers imperial concubine's art

BEIJING (R) — Chinese police have arrested four people for allegedly stealing 1,000-year-old frescoes that had been buried with an imperial concubine from a museum in northern Shaanxi province, the China Daily said. The four, including the husband of a museum employee, were arrested in Shaanxi, in western Xinjiang and in southern Guangdong province last month for allegedly stealing the frescoes, the newspaper said. The frescoes had been found in the tomb of a concubine of Tang dynasty (618-907) Emperor Li Shimin, who lived from 599 to 649, the newspaper said. Some of the relics have been recovered, it said, but did not mention how many were still missing or how they were stolen from the museum of the mausoleum of Tang dynasty, established in 1972. If convicted, the suspects could be sentenced to death.

Clinton honeymoons with Republican Congress

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The new Republican majority and President Bill Clinton set off on a honeymoon this week seeking common ground and cooperation, but both camps are vying to get the most out of this marriage of convenience.

The president huddled with congressional Democrats Friday, a day after he greeted Republican leaders at the White House with smiles and kind words for the goals set by the first Republican-controlled Congress in 40 years.

Mr. Clinton's best hope for turning his faltering presidency around is to win back party members who revolted after the election, besting the Republicans in party discipline, according to analysts.

And his chances for that may have actually improved with the last election.

"Traditionally Republicans have better party unity, but that was unity as a minority," notes Mark Holt with the Congressional Research Service.

And, as Americans tend to prefer having one party in the White House and the other in Congress, the November election results could provide an ironic windfall for Mr. Clinton in the 1996 presidential election.

The onus is also on the Republicans now to deliver what voters want and while their offer of tax cuts and deficit reduction won them the elections, they have yet to spell out where the necessary funds will come from.

The Democrats saw that opening Friday when they

lobbed their first volley with an "honesty in budgeting bill" that would require financing plans for any balanced budget measure.

Mr. Clinton also challenged the Republicans to match the success of his first two years and praised his own party for slashing the deficit while boosting growth when they controlled the legislature.

"The Congress chose to do the right thing, rather than the political thing, because they believed it was more important to make real life easier to Americans than it was to make political life more comfortable for people here in Washington," he said Friday.

But Mr. Clinton, keen to continue the camaraderie begun this week, added he was sure the Republicans "will have the same attitude."

And for now the public's rosy view of Republicans suggests the kind of "honeymoon period" traditionally reserved for presidents.

A Washington Post-ABC News survey out Friday showed a majority backed what they considered to be the Republicans' goals and said they trusted that party to handle the big issues better than the Democrats.

Paradoxically, those polled listed reducing the deficit as the top priority for Congress and relegated a middle class tax cut to number four, and they picked health care reform as second in importance.

Mr. Clinton, who many blamed for his party's midterm rout, was criticised for

setting aside his campaign promise of tax cuts in order to focus on deficit reduction and for prioritising health care reform though it was not popular politically.

The only clear message Americans seem to be sending Mr. Clinton is that he is right when he complains his messages don't get out and his successes go unnoticed — and that now he also has to worry Republicans will be taking credit for them.

But the public remains generally hostile to politicians, according to the poll, and if the trend holds, the Republicans could find themselves in the same boat which sank the Democrats in November.

President Clinton met Democratic congressional leaders Friday and charted a strategy to play down their differences, defend their policies and challenge the Republican drive for a balanced budget.

"We are here and anxious to get to work... and chart our course for the year ahead," Mr. Clinton told reporters in the Oval Office, where he commented on unemployment figures that fell to 5.4 per cent last month — a development he said showed his economic policies have been correct.

"We have grown the private economy as we have cut government," Mr. Clinton said. "That's a real recovery and a real bargain for the American people."

With the Democratic leaders standing behind him, Mr. Clinton insisted, "I will stand against any effort to roll back

or to rock the foundations of the recovery by proposals that explode the deficit or gimmicks that undermine the integrity of the budget we have worked so hard to put in place."

Mr. Clinton met a group of bipartisan congressional leaders Thursday — including House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate Republican leader Bob Dole — and insisted that a spirit of cooperation will prevail.

After Friday's Democrats-only session, however, the tone was one of conditions that must be met — particularly when it comes to Republican efforts to add an amendment to the constitution that would require a balanced federal budget.

White House officials privately acknowledge it will be difficult to block amendment proponents from getting the necessary two-thirds majority needed in both the House and Senate.

The House has already set a vote on the amendment for Jan. 19 and the Senate hopes to complete action before month's end.

If approved by Congress, 38 state legislatures must approve it within seven years for the amendment to become part of the constitution.

Instead of being seen as opposing an amendment that generally is popular with the public, Mr. Clinton and the Democrats agreed to call for a requirement specifying how the balancing will be achieved over a period of seven years.

Sun's return sparks celebration in Arctic outpost

INUUVIK, Northwest Territories (R) — Jubilant residents of Canada's Arctic set off fireworks, danced and ate caribou in celebration of their first fleeting glimpse of the sun this week after more than a month of frigid darkness.

The sun peeked above the horizon for just a few minutes Friday at Inuvik, but it was reason enough for a party in this rugged outpost of about 3,000 people at the northern extreme of North America.

"After the period of darkness, people are happy and feeling good to know the sun is back. It's a relief and a time for a new beginning," said Eddie Kolausok, an Inuvik teacher.

Local residents — who include the Eskimo, or Inuvialuit people as they prefer to be called — last saw the sun in the first week of December, although indirect rays have given the sky an orange glow in recent days.

To cheer the return of daylight to this remote area, the town put on a festival called Sunrise Celebration.

It began Thursday night with a feast of caribou and Arctic char fish, native singing, dancing, drum-playing and then fireworks and bonfires. Despite temperatures of minus 28 degrees Celsius (minus 18 F), most of the town turned out on a frozen lake for the festivities.

"This revives the spirit. It can get pretty bleak in the dead of winter here, so we came up with this idea to liven things up," said fire chief Ian Orbell.

But the main event came Friday, happy townspeople converged on a nearby hilltop on foot and in sleds, snowmobiles and cars for the sunrise at 1:38 p.m. mst (2038 GMT). They cheered and applauded as the sun crested, painting the sky a vibrant

orange, red and lavender. "The sunrises here are the most beautiful on earth. If you can take the cold, this is a wonderful place to be," said local resident Esther Gessner.

The sun was above the horizon for less than a half hour, but the festive mood continued into the weekend with square dancing and other activities.

The sunrise celebration has become a much-awaited feature of life in Inuvik, where it helps combat cabin fever and winter depression brought on by light deprivation.

The town is the government and service centre for Canada's western Arctic, a frozen and thinly populated frontier region of barren tundra where some hunters and trappers still live off the land.

Some locals had never seen fireworks before the festival was started. Although pyrotechnics are standard

fare in southern Canada on the national holiday July 1, there's little point of mounting such a display in Inuvik because of the constant daylight in the summertime.

"It never gets dark enough here on Canada Day for fireworks, so this is a big treat," said Chief Orbell.

In past years, frigid cold played havoc with the festival's traditional Inuvialuit drum-dancing display, so this year it was moved indoors.

Chinese judge pledges crime clampdown

BEIJING (AFP) — China's top judge has pledged tougher action this year against a mounting crime wave, with special attention given to corruption and the pressing issue of copyright violation.

The need to ensure national security, social stability and the safety of lives and property "is a pressing demand of the people, and a duty that cannot be shirked by the people's courts," the president of the Supreme People's Court, Ren Jianxin, was quoted as saying by the China Daily Saturday.

A rising crime wave saw the number of criminal cases handled by Chinese courts in the first 11 months of last year jump to 437,429, more than 20 per cent higher than in the same period of 1993.

Rapid economic development, mass migrations of rural labourers to the cities and growing unemployment have all contributed to the increasing crime figures, and Judge Ren admitted that balancing progress with social stability was a difficult task.

"The work of reform, development and stability is very heavy," Judge Ren said in a speech on the opening day of the National Work Conference of Higher Court Presidents.

Top priority in 1995 will be protecting intellectual property rights (IPR), Judge Ren said, adding that the proficiency of Chinese courts in the field should be "upgraded to a new level."

China is embroiled in a

major dispute with the United States over IPR protection which could escalate into a full-scale trade war with both sides threatening sanctions and retaliation.

Washington has given Beijing until Feb. 4 to take effective steps to improve IPR protection or face 100 per cent tariffs on Chinese goods worth \$1 billion.

China has warned that it will retaliate with sweeping sanctions of its own if Washington goes through with its threat.

The Chinese laws on trademarks, patents, copyrights and unfair competition, as well as the relevant international conventions China has ratified, should be applied to cases concerning intellectual property," Judge Ren said.

Foreign companies have repeatedly complained about the weak enforcement of copyright regulations in China and have also accused the courts of dealing too lightly with violators.

Another priority this year will be the continued battle against corruption, Judge Ren said, pointing out that the number of graft cases tried in the 1994 January-November period surged 65 per cent to 34,899.

"Those who use their positions for personal profits and take bribes should be brought to justice in strict accordance with the law," Judge Ren said.

While the value of the military's business empire is a closely guarded secret, foreign military analysts estimate civilian contracts bring in profits of \$5 billion a year.

Absorption by the army's civilian business arm of nearly \$7.0 billion in foreign investment alone in recent years gives some indication of the scale of the funds involved.

On New Year's Day, the army issued a regulation signed by Chief of General Staff Zhang Wannian, Chief Political Commissar Yu Yongbo and Chief of Logistics Fu Quanguo subjecting the army's business empire to audits of accounts and fiscal discipline for the first time.

"The aim is to ensure that various levels of the leadership strictly abide by financial and economic laws and rules," the newspaper said.

Major targets for 1995 will be counterfeiting, the stealing and sale of value-added tax receipts, tax evasion, smuggling and producing shoddy goods.

In a separate development, Chinese police have captured 32 gangs of pirates operating along the Yangtze River after reports of 432 robberies at ports and on the water of China's longest river, the People's daily said Saturday.

River Police have launched a New Year campaign to protect the river, a major artery for transport from central China to the commercial metropolis of Shanghai, from gangs of marauding river pirates, the newspaper said.

Preliminary figures show River Police received reports of 432 cases of robbery along the river from 1993 to October 1994, the newspaper said.

They cracked 252 cases and rounded up 32 gangs, it said. The gangs specialised in stealing coal, oil, quarried stone and steel from ships sailing the river and posed a serious threat to shipping, the newspaper said.

Mexican rebels prolong truce in Chiapas

MEXICO CITY (Agencies)

Zapatista rebels said a six-day truce declared on Dec. 31 would remain in force in the poor southern state of Chiapas for six more days, Mexican television reported.

The ceasefire was to be prolonged until Jan. 12, the Zapatista National Liberation Army said in a statement issued from their stronghold of San Cristobal de Las Casas.

The rebels also put forth conditions to resume peace talks with the government that were broken off last June after the sides failed to agree on Zapatista demands for better living conditions.

They said President Ernesto Zedillo must allow opposition leader Amado Avendaño to set up a transitional government in Chiapas and allow a commission headed by a local bishop to act as mediator in the conflict.

Although Mr. Zedillo has so far agreed to let Roman Catholic Bishop Samuel Ruiz act as the chief mediator, the rebels said they were nevertheless prepared to hold talks with the government.

The Zapatistas, who staged a bloody uprising a year ago to press indigenous demands and reform, broke a delicate ceasefire last month to protest a local election result.

Rebels seized several towns and villages but a clash with the army was averted when Mr. Zedillo agreed to let the commission headed by Bishop Ruiz mediate the conflict.

Meanwhile former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, barely a month out of office, is coming under fierce attack from Mexicans who say he put his personal interests above all else and left the country in economic shambles.

Political opponents are threatening to file treason charges against Mr. Salinas, who is on a world tour campaigning to be the head of the new World Trade Organisation.

The sudden decline of his reputation matches that of Mexico's economy, which has plunged into chaos following a pre-Christmas peso devaluation.

Mr. Salinas left office on Dec. 1 as a relatively popular president known worldwide as an economic reformer who forged a landmark free-trade agreement with the United States and Canada. Mexico's economy, after a year of political turmoil, appeared on the verge of an extended boom with the administration of President Zedillo predicting a 4 per cent growth and 4 per cent inflation for 1995.

But Mr. Salinas is now being blamed for allowing the country to accumulate a huge current account deficit that was aggravated by his refusal to devalue the peso despite constant cries from foreign investors.

Mr. Zedillo, just three weeks after taking office, was forced to set the peso free, which caused it to drop 35 per cent in value, and put together an emergency rescue plan that included \$18 billion in foreign credits to stabilise the suddenly spinning economy.

Critics charge that Mr. Salinas and former Finance Minister Pedro Aspe did not want to devalue the currency because of concern that it would hurt his image as he campaigned for the World Trade Organisation post.

The latest issue of magazine Proceso had a picture of Mr. Salinas on its cover under the title "the guilty one." Even the head of Mr. Salinas's long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, said Wednesday that his government had made "inopportune decisions that were not completely right."

The centre-left Democratic Revolution Party, or PRD, said it will file charges against Mr. Salinas and several former cabinet members next week for conduct that "caused great damage to society."

Mr. Zedillo, in a Tuesday speech unveiling the rescue plan, appeared to echo the suspicions of many that the former president had put his personal ambitions above the interests of the nation.

"I head a government that will always speak the truth, however hard it may be, a government that will safeguard the general interest he said.

Bosnian rivals disagree over ceasefire details

SARAJEVO (R) — The

United Nations said on Saturday Bosnia's warring factions had reached an impasse over carrying out provisions of a new ceasefire, with each side reluctant to compromise.

The latest truce between the Muslim-led Bosnian government and its Bosnian Serb foes has slowed fighting since it took effect a week ago, with the exception of the Bihać enclave.

The U.N. reported sporadic shelling in the northwest enclave and the government accused Serbs of violating the truce on the eastern edge of the pocket.

Talks between Muslim and Serb negotiators have stumbled over implementing key elements of the ceasefire, with government troops refusing to withdraw from a demilitarised zone (DMZ) above Sarajevo.

Serb forces in turn have refused to reopen roads to civilian traffic into the Bosnian capital, demanding Muslim troops first pull out of the Mount Igman DMZ.

The Bosnian Serb side continues to link the issue of opening the routes across the airport to the presence of Bosnian government troops on Mount Igman, U.N. spokesman Alexander Ivancko told reporters in Sarajevo.

The truce appeared to be taking hold everywhere but the Bihać region, where shelling and mortar attacks continued Friday, U.N. peacekeepers said.

Some 100 artillery explosions and more than 200

rounds of small arms fire were registered in the past 24 hours near the town of Velika Kladusa in the north of the government-held enclave, said U.N. Major Herve Gourmelon.

Bihać town, a U.N.-declared "safe area," was hit by an 82mm mortar bomb Friday afternoon for the first time since the truce began. There were no casualties reported.

The U.N. was investigating the incident but previous mortar and artillery attacks on Bihać town have been blamed on Bosnian or Croatian Serb forces.

Bosnian state radio claimed Bosnian Serb forces were firing on government 5th Corps troops Saturday on the eastern edge of the enclave around Bosanska Krupa. The report could not be immediately confirmed by the United Nations.

Despite earlier promises to withdraw from the U.N. demilitarised zone on Mount Igman southwest of Sarajevo, Muslim-led troops were still occupying three strategic lookout points in the DMZ, U.N. Captain Miriam Souchaki told Reuters.

"We are unable to (actually) inspect one of the places because the Bosnian army tells us the access way is mined," said Capt. Souchaki.

U.N. soldiers had set out to sweep the DMZ once again in hopes of encouraging remaining government troops to withdraw.

But a planned inspection by a U.N. general accompa-

nied by Bosnian Muslim and Serb officers was cancelled after the two sides Friday refused to sign an agreement spelling out steps to verify troop withdrawals and establish zones of separation.

The U.N. commander in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, planned to meet Bosnian Serb Army chief General Ratko Mladic Sunday to try to break the deadlock which has prevented the planned deployment of peacekeeping troops between rival armies.

Maj. Gourmelon said the dispute over the Sarajevo DMZ was slowing down efforts to cement the ceasefire. "The implementation process is too slow. The next joint commission meeting will be on Jan. 11 but our feeling is that the two sides are working with a deep degree of mistrust, approaching issues in a very bureaucratic way, point by point."

Scattered machine gun volleys have broken the snow-bound calm in the Sarajevo area since late Friday but the U.N. attributed this to the Serbs' Orthodox Christmas weekend.

In at least one positive development, the Bosnian Serbs were issuing clearances for almost all U.N. convoys without restrictions, even those carrying fuel for peacekeepers in government enclaves, Maj. Gourmelon said.

The Bosnian Serbs had promised to return freedom of movement to the U.N. as part of the ceasefire accord,



French U.N. soldiers stand guard during the reopening ceremony of the Latin Bridge in Sarajevo. The bridge, near which the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, suffered damage by shelling and was repaired by Bosnian workers and French soldiers (AFP photo)

which arose from a peace mission by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

On Friday, one of Sarajevo's most famous bridges across the Miljacka River reopened to pedestrian traffic after having been heavily damaged in Bosnia's 33-month-old civil war.

The rebuilt Latin Bridge was inaugurated during a brief ceremony attended by Ante Zelic, vice-president of the Sarajevo municipality, and General Herve Gobilard of France, United Nations commander for Sarajevo.

French engineers from the 17th Parachute Regiment,

part of the U.N. Protection Force here, spent a month restoring the structure.

"Let this reconstruction be the first such visible sign (of peace) in a long series of others," Gen. Gobilard said, speaking on the sixth day of a ceasefire between Bosnian army and rebel Serb troops.

Mr. Zelic thanked France for its contribution to rebuilding the bridge, which from the end of World War II until last year had been known as Princep Bridge.

It was named for Serbian nationalist Gavrillo Princip, who on Aug. 28, 1914 carried out the assassination nearby

of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, crown prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The assassination sparked World War I across Europe. Meanwhile Bosnian Croat leader Kresimir Zubak said Friday he could see no sign of a "just peace" in Bosnia-Herzegovina and called on his troops to resort to force if a political solution was not forthcoming, the Croatian News Agency (HINA) reported.

Speaking at Siroki Brijeg, some 150 kilometres south west of Sarajevo, Mr. Zubak noted "the war is not at an end and there is still no sign of a just peace."

The "president" of the self-declared Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna as well as of the Muslim-Croat federation created last March signed up to the four-month cessation of hostilities which began at the New Year and said Friday that Bosnian Croat (HVO) troops were committed to a "just peace."

But he also invited HVO fighters "to pull together your forces to obtain by military force what we will not be able to obtain by political means," HINA reported.

Sri Lanka military prepares for truce

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri

Lankan security forces Saturday began preparing for a truce with Tamil rebels while Tamil troops pulled out of the Mount Igman DMZ.

The open-ended truce between security forces and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) comes into effect Sunday.

"There have been no incidents in the past 24 hours. We like to think the hostilities have ceased ahead of schedule. We have to wait and see," military spokesman Brigadier Nihal Jayakody said.

Tamil groups violently opposed to the LTTE said they have taken extra security measures because they feared the rebels may now try to annihilate their rivals.

"We welcome this. But in the past the LTTE has used a cessation of hostilities to annihilate rivals in the Tamil community," said Dharmalingam Sridharan, chief of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam.

Brig. Jayakody said that the military leadership was determined to ensure that personnel in the field were thoroughly briefed on the details of the truce in the embattled northeast.

"We are in the process of sending instructions to field commanders. We want to make sure that everyone down the line gets the message. The agreement has to be respected to the letter," said Brig. Jayakody.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga told reporters that both sides wanted to see if an initial two-week truce period worked well before thinking of extending it.

Just hours before Kumaratunga signed the seven-point truce agreement Thursday, LTTE guerrillas and government troops clashed in north-eastern Vellu Oya, leaving three rebels dead and six soldiers wounded.

Mrs. Kumaratunga announced the truce in parliament Friday and vowed to give "maximum devotion of power" to minority Tamils in any settlement to the ethnic conflict that has



Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga gestures during a press conference as she outlined her peace plan to end Sri Lanka's ethnic war which has claimed over 30,000 lives in the past 23 years (AFP photo)

claimed more than 30,000 lives.

Mrs. Kumaratunga, 49, told parliament that an aborted pact signed between her late father Solomon Bandaranaike and Tamil leader S.J.V. Chelvanayagum would be the basis for a political settlement to the ethnic issue.

The pact signed after Mrs. Bandaranaike became prime minister in 1956, ran into militant opposition from the majority Sinhalese Buddhist community, which described the accord as "an act of treachery."

However, Mrs. Kumaratunga, who is also from the majority community, said she did not expect fresh opposition because she and her People's Alliance had received a mandate for peace when they won parliamentary and presidential polls.

The truce agreement, which was also signed by LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, came after two rounds of talks in the LTTE stronghold of Jaffna in the north. A third round of negotiations has been fixed for Jan. 14.

Six peace committees headed by representatives sent by foreign governments have been set up to monitor the truce. Both sides agreed to a 600-metre (1,900-foot) demilitarised zone outside security force camps in the northeast.

The LTTE has been blamed for the slaying of several Tamil politicians and scores of rival cadres during 14 months of failed peace talks with the former United National Party regime.

The LTTE, which is fighting for a separate state in the northeast for minority Tamils, controls large parts of the north but is mostly confined to jungles in the east after being driven out of the region by the army in 1991.

Sri Lanka's two-week truce with Tamil rebels, starting Sunday helps both sides maintain momentum to end the bloody ethnic conflict, but analysts note the real hard bargaining for a durable peace is yet to come.

And, the government has said it will be forced to resort to the military option if the peace talks fail.

ports so far of casualties or damage from the tremor which shook high-rise buildings and sent lights swinging inside houses.

In Saturday's earlier quake, police said an 85-year-old woman in Hachinohe died from a heart attack and up to 30 people were injured by falling objects.

Railway authorities suspended trains in the Hachinohe area until crew made safety checks of lines.

Water and power supplies, damaged last week, were again disrupted by Saturday's quake.

Seoul team leaves for nuclear talks in U.S.

SEOUL (AFP) — A South

Korean government delegation left Saturday for Washington to discuss details of the supply of safe nuclear reactors to North Korea.

The delegation was headed by Park In-Kuk, director of the Foreign Ministry's disarmament-atomic power division.

In Washington, Park will hold tripartite talks with U.S. and Japanese officials on the inauguration of the Korea Energy Development Organisation (KEDO).

KEDO is responsible for financing, supplying and constructing the reactors. Seoul and Washington hope to set up the multilateral organisation in February.

Under last year's landmark nuclear accord, Washington

agreed to supply two light-water reactors, at an estimated cost of \$4 billion, to the North in exchange for a shutdown of its controversial graphite reactors.

Meanwhile General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, will visit Seoul this month to discuss whether to go ahead with U.S.-South Korean war exercises cancelled last year, a report said Saturday.

During his visit from Jan. 19, Mr. Shalikashvili will also explain Washington's decision to cancel a phased reduction of U.S. troops from South Korea, the Korea Herald said.

The newspaper quoted a military source as saying that U.S. and South Korean mili-

tary leaders may agree to skip the annual Team Spirit exercise this year, only if North Korea faithfully implements its nuclear accord with Washington.

Team Spirit was cancelled last year to help create a favourable mood for negotiations on neutralising the North's controversial nuclear programme.

North Korea called for a permanent halt to the annual exercise, but "Seoul" and Washington said it could be resumed if the North balked at the nuclear accord.

The newspaper said Mr. Shalikashvili would explain to South Korean leaders the U.S. decision to suspend the East Asia Strategic Initiative (EASI), which called for a

phased reduction of U.S. forces from South Korea and Japan.

By cancelling the EASI, Washington plans to maintain the existing 37,000 troops here and 45,000 in Japan, plus the 7th Fleet in East Asia, it said.

Washington withdrew 7,000 American troops between 1990 and 1992 in the first phase of a three-stage troop reduction plan under the EASI.

Another 7,000 were to have been pulled out from South Korea between 1993 and the end of this year, but the second phase of troop reductions was suspended last year when tensions escalated over the North's nuclear programme.

Former Indian premier quits opposition party

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Former

Indian Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh has quit the country's main centrist opposition party, and said he will stay away from politics for five years, newspapers reported Saturday.

"I will not be renewing my membership of the Janata Dal (People's Party)," Mr. V.P. Singh, who headed India's first coalition government that lasted 11 months until November 1990, said in Bombay Friday.

"My exit from the Dal is no sacrifice," The Hindustan Times quoted him as saying. "I will not be part of any political party for the next five years," he added.

V.P. Singh, who enjoys widespread respect for his integrity added that his long non-political forays during the last five years to campaign against corruption.

The Times said V.P. Singh's decision was the re-

sult of his marginalisation in the Janata Dal, which has suffered repeated splits in recent years but still rules three of India's 25 states.

The Janata Dal was the dominant constituent of a five-party National Front government which came to power in New Delhi in December 1989 with V.P. Singh as India's seventh prime minister.

Political analysts said V.P. Singh's move was a blow to the Janata Dal, which lacks another leader of national stature ahead of parliamentary elections due in mid-1996.

"Maybe he is angry," said Janata Dal MP Ram Vilas Paswan, commenting on V.P. Singh's decision. "He has his own commitments and style of functioning."

Mr. V.P. Singh formed the Janata Dal in 1988 after quitting the ruling Congress (I) Party, then headed by slain

Rajiv Gandhi, and launching a nation-wide crusade against corruption.

Meanwhile a crisis in Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's Congress Party deepened Friday when a disident leader called for elections for the post of party president.

Arjun Singh, a former cabinet minister seen as Mr. Rao's main rival for the leadership, said the party's head should be chosen by a vote.

Mr. Rao, the current Congress president, was chosen by a committee of senior Congress leaders after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in May, 1991.

"Let the party elect whoever they want to elect and that person will take the party to the next general elections," Mr. Singh told members of the Foreign Correspondent's Club in New Delhi. General

elections are scheduled in early 1996.

Mr. Singh, who resigned as minister of human resources development in Mr. Rao's cabinet on Christmas Eve, denied any plans to split the Congress Party.

"I am not intending to cause a split in this great organisation. There's nothing to be gained politically or personally," he said.

Mr. Rao is also facing a challenge from local Congress parties in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state. He appointed his political adviser Jitendra Prasad as president of the state Congress Party Thursday.

Mr. Prasad replaced N.D. Tewari, a former finance and external affairs minister who had demanded the withdrawal of Congress support for the state government ruled by a low-caste Hindu party.

African summit focuses on Rwandan refugees

NAIROBI (Agencies) —

Leaders from seven central and east African nations gathered here for a one-day summit Saturday to discuss how to persuade hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees to return home.

"The question that should be uppermost in our minds is how to prevent such a catastrophe as was witnessed last year from repeating itself," Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi said in his welcoming address as leaders and their foreign ministers gathered at the Presidential Palace.

But the glaring absence of Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, the only head of state to stay away from Nairobi, will undoubtedly detract from the summit, according to Kenyan press reports. Mr. Mobutu is represented by his Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo.

One delegate at a summit preparatory-meeting of foreign ministers and officials in Nairobi Friday said the summit would be a failure without him.

"The questions that will be asked need Mobutu's personal response," he told the Nation newspaper.

Rwandan President Faustin Bizimungu, Sylvette Ntibunganya of Burundi, Ugandan Yoweri Museveni, Ali Hassan Mwinyi of Tanzania and Frederick Chiluba of Zambia all joined their host Mr. Arap Moi for the summit in his presidential palace.

The U.N. secretary general's special representative in Kigali, Shaharyar Khan, was an observer at the summit.

Mr. Arap Moi said some five million Rwandan refugees were affected, two million of whom are based in neighbouring countries.

"It is only through a genuine process of national reconciliation that a cycle of violence in our sister state can be avoided," he warned.

Rwanda's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Minister Jacques Bizozagara told journalists that his country expected the summit to provide "concrete measures" to tackle the problem.

He said Rwanda wanted transit zones to be set up for

returning refugees, the countrywide deployment of human rights observers, and extra U.N. soldiers — 5,500 — to police the operation.

He said U.N. troops were needed in particular to separate the former regime's soldiers and militia from refugees in giant camps in Zaire and Tanzania where they continued a campaign of intimidation.

Mr. Bizozagara said the Kigali government would not hold talks with the leaders of the former interim government, now based in Zaire as a government-in-exile, as it would mean talking to the "authors of genocide."

Neighbouring Burundi, which itself teeters on the brink of a bloodbath comparable to Rwanda's because of its acute tribal problems, has a special interest on the Nairobi outcome.

There are some 300,000 Burundian refugees, mostly in Zaire while several hundred thousand others are displaced within their own country.

The summit was due to end

Saturday.

"Our region has had more than its share of political catastrophes and catastrophes," Mr. Arap Moi said.

He said 1995 could be a happier year in Africa "if we make progress in giving peace a chance everywhere on this continent."

Tanzania, broker of the 1993 Arusha Peace Accords on Rwanda which were nullified by last year's genocide of up to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus, pushed Saturday for concrete progress on the return of some two million refugees.

"It is important for the Rwandan government to understand that the solution lies in the return of their people and we are pushing them to that goal," Tanzanian Minister of State Ahmad Hassan Ditta told Reuters.

He said the new Tutsi-dominated government in Rwanda must also come to terms with the 40,000 former government soldiers and militiamen now in camps in eastern Zaire.

Jordan Times

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Change and media choices

EVEN BEFORE Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker had a chance to name members of his Cabinet, there rose voices attacking it as one that could not meet the challenges of the new era. Certain "sources" were quoted in this newspaper yesterday as predicting that the new Cabinet "would not be able to bring about enough changes to meet the responsibilities of the peace era."

The phenomenon of politicians trying to undermine other politicians for their own reasons and interests is not uncommon anywhere in the world, especially in open and democratic societies. In our country, the case is no different, and we have to accept the fact that political wrangling will continue to be with us for as long as there are politicians and changes in governments. It is therefore not an easy task for this or any other newspaper to censor any politician for holding a different view. What is unfortunate, though, is the fact that politicians would not go "on the record" when they are critical of the government in power or they are not objective enough in their criticism. A good case in point of the lack of objectivity on the part of some politicians is evident in the statement carried by the Jordan Times yesterday in which the "sources" attacked Sharif Zeid's team even before the team was put together.

In a country like ours where so many people are "mustawzreen," i.e. ministerial hopefuls, politicians keep making noises of approval or disapproval, depending on how close or distant they are from the prime minister-designate or the incumbent prime minister. That is up to them. But despite the fact that there has been a much higher turnover of ministers in the past than prime ministers, change in government itself, in the way it functions and does business, has been slow. It is not uncommon, then, to hear ordinary people say in resignation that they do not believe that real change will take place whatever government takes office.

This is so probably because in the case of established, long practising democracies, the party that wins the highest number of seats in Parliament either forms its own government or negotiates with other parties, with clear mandates, to form a new administration. In the event, consultations and negotiations are made over a common agenda and programme for the new government. This unfortunately is not the case in Jordan. Consultations are made more over names and regions than agenda and programmes. And the names are chosen through a process that is almost unique and exclusive to Jordan. It is, therefore, the names which float around that matter, not the programme of a well-established team or party.

So until we reach a more advanced political stage, bickering will continue to be part of the game. Meanwhile, the government-run media would do well to cover the debates that usually accompany the formation of any new government. By talking about the activities of or interviewing the prime minister-designate and those who are close to him in a bid to sound them out on his policies, programme and vision, the official media could contribute to reducing the hearsay and gossip. It should not be left only to the print media to carry that task. In any way, Jordan's electronic media has an important impact to make not only on our citizens' perceptions but also on neighbouring countries, which need to see that we have a thriving democracy and respect for political pluralism and freedoms.

Until we are able to get our information act together, speculation, propaganda and gossip will continue to thrive in our midst. In addition, and more importantly perhaps, educating our people and others will be more difficult and distant.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

WITH THE resignation of the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and the appointment of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker to form a new government, a new political era starts in the Kingdom and a new chapter opens for the Jordanians, said Al Ra'i daily Saturday. His Majesty King Hussein's choice of Sharif Zeid to be at the helm of the new government is a wise one since the veteran statesman is capable of dealing with the crucial stage through which Jordan is passing, said the daily. Sharif Zeid is facing rapid changes in the region and a host of chronic issues at the domestic level but he is to be trusted to steer the ship towards safety, said the daily. The outgoing government has no doubt done its best and exerted its utmost efforts in shouldering the heavy responsibilities facing the country and its services to the nation is a source of pride to all Jordanians, added the daily. It is hoped that Sharif Zeid will build on the achievements of the outgoing government and would take measures designed to help deal with the internal issues facing the country.

MAHMOUD RIMAWI discussed a visit to Paris by the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, and said it was intended to end the U.N. embargo on the Iraqi people. France, which is opening a liaison office in Baghdad now to care for its interests in Iraq, is a major trading partner with that country and its oil firms have major interests in Iraq, said the writer. Furthermore, France, along with China and Russia are seriously seeking to end the embargo and to end the sufferings of the Iraqi people who have complied fully with the U.N. resolutions since the occupation of Kuwait and the end of the Gulf war, added the writer. Perhaps the opening of the French liaison office at the Romanian embassy in Baghdad would pave the ground for a greater pressure to be exerted on the world community to end the sanctions of the Iraqi people, continued the writer. The writer said 1995 could see the end of the tragedy of the Iraqi people who have faced untold sufferings as a result of the unjust embargo.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Economic standstill between Jordan and Palestine

IT IS NO secret that the exchange of goods across the bridges between Jordan and Palestine is now at a complete standstill. Both sides are not allowing any commodity to be imported from the other side.

In our recent Arab history, we used to describe the relations between Syria and Lebanon under French occupation as special, but this special relationship was followed by a full economic disengagement with independence. Instead of one currency and one central bank, called bank of Syria and Lebanon, the two sister countries decided to go separate. The divorce was dubbed "disengagement" or "qati'aa."

The same thing is now taking place between Jordan and Palestine. The relationship was claimed to be distinguished while under Israeli occupation of the West Bank, but it is shifting now to an official break-off under Palestinian self authority, not only at the level of currency and central banking, but also at the level of trade.

As it is well known, Jordan was able to obtain an Israeli consent to allow Jordan to export goods worth up to \$30 million to the West Bank before December 31, 1994. The period expired without any Jordanian commodity being able to cross the bridges to the West Bank. For the first instance one would think that it was Israel, which gave in one hand and took in the other, and that Israeli concessions are

revocable without notice, but a Jordanian official corrected this mistake and revealed the fact that it is the Palestinian Authority and not the occupation authority which prevented Jordanian products from reaching the West Bank market, thus hurting not only the Jordanian producers but the Palestinian consumers as well.

Jordan and Palestine concluded an economic agreement on January 7, 1994, but it was not put into effect because priority was given to the Palestinian — Israeli economic agreement signed in Paris in April 29, 1994, which contradicts the economic agreement with Jordan. The Palestinian side requested reopening the Jordanian — Palestinian agreement for renegotiation, which was met with a Jordanian consent, and a new economic agreement was reached but unfortunately was never signed. Another Palestinian delegation came to Amman to renegotiate once more the unsigned economic draft agreement and reached a new revised one and agreed to form several joint committees to deal with specific issues of mutual interest. As usual all agreements and draft agreements were declared in press conferences accompanied with hot publicity which pleased the public opinion on both sides of the Jordan River.

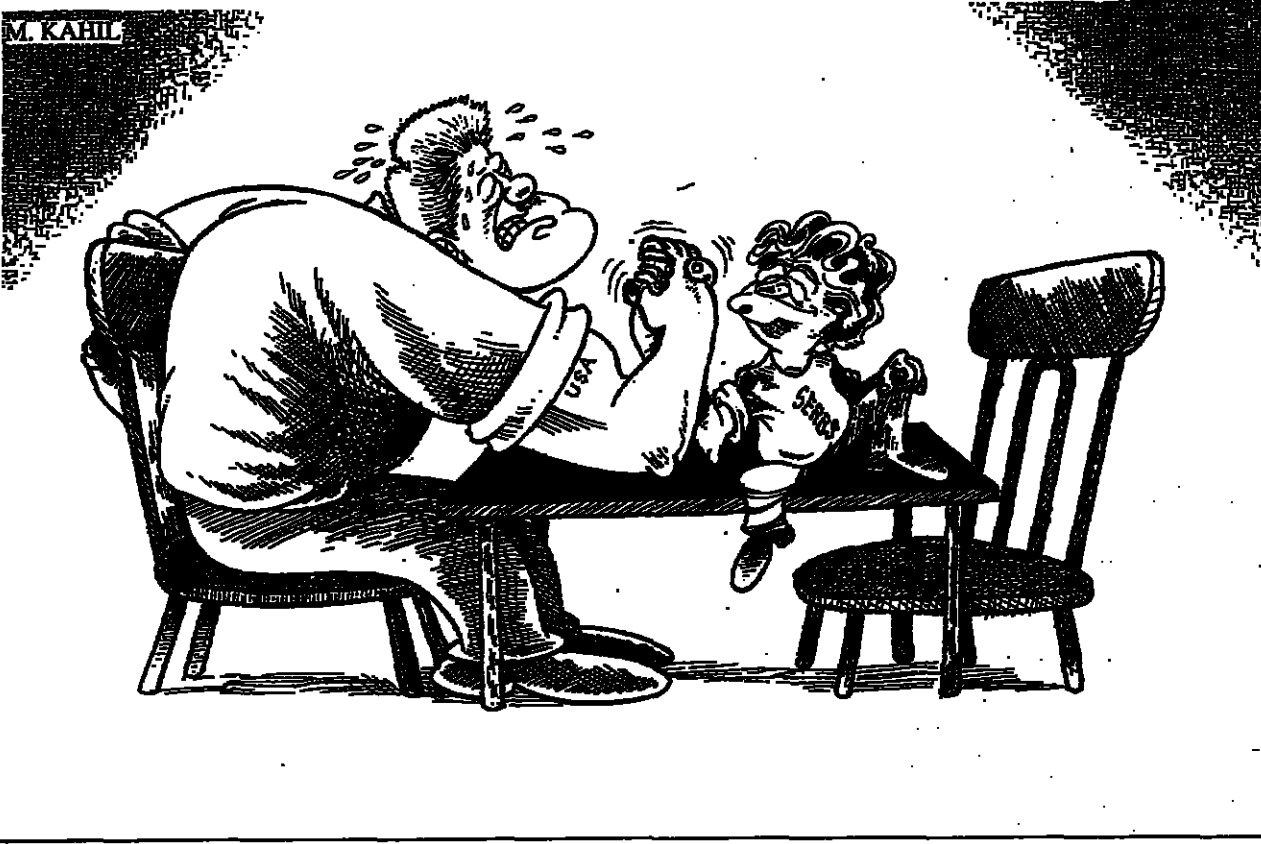
However, the Palestinian members of the agreed com-

mittees did not show up in Amman on the agreed dates, and the revised draft agreement was also left unsigned, not because the Palestinian leadership thought that the agreement was not good enough in itself, in fact it represented a lot of obvious sacrifices on behalf of Jordan and in favour of Palestine regarding unlimited freedom of Palestinian exports and sweeping exemptions of taxes. But the Palestinian leadership was apparently against the principle of entering into agreements with Jordan, because of the alleged competition between the Jordanian and Palestinian leaders on gaining the hearts and consequently the allegiance of Palestinians in the West Bank.

Jordan finally found no alternative but to reciprocate and prevent Palestinian products from being imported to Jordan, because the continuation of trade in one direction will result in more accumulation of Jordan dinars in the West Bank to a dangerous level. Palestinian goods in transit to other Arab countries were allowed to flow across Jordan without obstacles.

It is surprising that an economic unofficial and undeclared economic war between Jordan and Palestine is in progress while we still talk loudly about a distinguished relationship, and start warming up for trade normalisation with Israel. But what else can we do?

By Dr. Fahed Fanek



Palestinians must quit peace talks if Israel does not halt settlement

By Pascal B. Karmy

WE OFTEN hear Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and other Israeli leaders call for peaceful co-existence between Jews and Arabs in Israel itself and in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Unfortunately, the facts on the ground, which are created by the Israeli government policy, especially with regard to the settlements, do not encourage at all this peaceful co-existence.

The latest fierce confrontation, which occurred a few days ago between the Jewish settlers in Efrat settlement and the Israeli army on the one side and the Palestinians, including the Al Khadder village inhabitants, on the other is just one example among thousands.

This confrontation, resulting from the attempt by the Efrat settlers, supported by the Israeli army, to usurp Al Khadder village lands show clearly that Israel is still bent on "robbing" directly or indirectly, the lands of the Palestinians for building more settlements in order to surround the Palestinian towns and villages and cut them off from each other or truncate Palestinian territory. In doing so, Israel plans to create a sort of Palestinian "bantustans" (which the ex-South African governments attempted to establish for the black population) and thus prevent the creation of one whole compact Palestinian sovereign territory in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The latest decision of the Israeli government, with regard to the Efrat settlement, was to grant its settlers another land closer to the existing settlement but this decision has not changed the situation as this land also belongs to Al Khadder villagers. The latter have brandished title deeds in their hands to prove their ownership well before the creation of the Jewish State in 1948. Even assuming that Al Khadder land is public property, as the settlers allege, Israel as an "occupier" under international law cannot dispose of it in the way it wishes. According to the Hague

Regulations (Article 23, G) of 1899 and 1907 as supplemented and amplified by Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, occupation does not confer ownership of public land on the occupier. Article 53 of Hague on Regulations specifically provides that "The occupying state shall be regarded only as administrator and usufructuary of buildings, real estate, forests and agricultural estates belonging to the hostile state and situated in the occupied territory. It must safeguard the capital of these properties and administer them in accordance with the rules of usufruct." Article 53 of the Geneva Convention prohibits destruction of real or personal public and private property except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations. The same article provides that short of alienation of ownership, the occupier may lease the state property providing its term does not extend beyond the duration of the occupation.

Thus it is incontrovertible in law that all settlements built after 1967 in the West Bank or in Gaza Strip are absolutely illegal as provided in the Hague Regulations and the Geneva Convention quoted above. They are also illegal in accordance with several United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and in particular 242 and 338, which are embodied in the Oslo Accord of Sept. 13 of 1993. In addition, building of settlements is contrary to the letter and spirit of the accords of Sept. 13, 1993 and of May 4, 1994 concluded between Israel and the PLO. In accordance with Article V, para 4 of the Oslo accord it "the outcome of the permanent status negotiations should not be prejudiced or preempted by agreements reached for the interim period." And for a stronger reason nothing should be done on the ground such as confiscation or expropriation of Palestinian lands for building settlements, which surely does not only prejudice or preempt the outcome of the permanent status negotiations but in fact makes of the Oslo accord a mere

worthless scrap of paper. For if Israel continues to build settlements at the present rate in two years' time, when permanent status negotiations start, there will be no land to negotiate about.

During the unaltered British mandate over Palestine and after its termination, the basic conflict between the Palestinians and Jews and subsequently Israel revolved around two essential elements, namely: inhabitants and territory. Israel, in connivance with the world Jewry and the Western world, (mainly Britain and the USA), had succeeded by hook and crook to expel the Palestinians from their homeland, Palestine, in 1948. After the war of 1967 and the subsequent occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Israel expelled thousands of Palestinians from those territories in order to bring thousands of Jews from abroad to replace the original inhabitants. For Jewish immigration, Israel could not have been established.

As regards territory, which is the second element in the conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians, Israel considered the lands and properties of the Palestinians, who were expelled from Palestine, whether in 1948 or in 1967, as what Israel called "Absentee Property." With this ruthless colonising mentality which has no parallel in modern history, Israel took possession of this property and confiscated it for the benefit of the state of Israel and some of which were sold or hired to build settlements. When Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip it did likewise with the so-called "Absentee Property" and feverishly built thousands of settlements especially in Jerusalem and around it.

It is, therefore, absolutely imperative that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) stand firm vis-a-vis Israel on the question of settlements, even if that is likely to stop the peace process. The PNA should refuse to proceed with the peace process until Israel actually stops building or fattening settlements at the expense of Palestinian land as this is the core of the

problem now. For otherwise, how can the PNA convince the Palestinian people of the national benefits of the peace process, if it does not take positive action to protect Palestinian territory. The Palestinians do not want a farcical peace but a genuine one, which will enable them to live on their own territory and to decide their destiny. And if Israel aspires for peace and co-existence with the Palestinians, it must pursue these goals with honesty therefore stop actions which are likely to destroy or hinder the peace process. Otherwise Israel will lose its credibility not only vis-a-vis the Palestinians but with the Arab countries as well.

Israel must realise that the PLO had taken great risks when it concluded the Oslo accord in 1993, and indeed it must be grateful to the PLO as with this accord the way was opened for Israel to conclude the peace agreement with Jordan on Oct. 26, 1994 and to establish amicable links with some other Arab states.

It is relevant to this article to quote Mr. John Whitebeck's wise advice to the Israeli leaders in his article "Israel's Choice: Palestinian Statehood or Chaos" published in the Jordan Times on January 3, 1995; "Logically, only one viable option remains — accepting Palestinian sovereignty in the Palestinian lands occupied in 1967 subject to an agreed formula for an equitable sharing of a physically divided Jerusalem. It is high time for Israeli leaders to stop pretending that the earth is flat and to actually lead by telling their people clearly and honestly that Palestinian statehood is essential if a lasting peace in the Middle East is ever to be achieved and is thus fundamentally in the interests of Israel and Israelis."

"Actually, there is one other alternative to Palestinian statehood — chaos and an explosion of frustration and violence on a scale previously unimagined. This explosion will not wait until 1999 if Israel does not soon make clear that the 'peace process' is leading to a destination which Palestinians are likely to prefer an honourable martyrdom."

LETTERS

Customs duties on cars: Where is the logic?

To the Editor:

MY STORY is a familiar one like many others who have a car in this country under a temporary entry permit. The big difference in my story is the fact that my car has been brought over from America. How many other car owners have shipped their car from America and have it here in Jordan under a temporary entry permit? I would be extremely surprised if the number is more than a few. I wonder why that is? I will tell you. The majority of people could not and would not pay the shipping costs.

Before shipping my car from America last year, I checked for several months with personnel in the Customs Department, the Royal Automobile Club, etc. regarding the regulations surrounding such a procedure. I was assured time after time that I could bring my car into Jordan and could keep it here for at least one or two years, renewing the temporary permit as required. As a result, I decided to bring my car over and keep it with me until I leave.

Please tell me who would be naive enough to ship his/her car into this country, particularly all the way from America, if he/she knew they would end up having to pay customs duties on it or ship it back out after only a couple of months of using it? I can tell you right now that no one would. It's not like I come from Syria, Saudi Arabia or any other neighbouring country and can easily drive/ship it back home.

I do understand the government's concern about the cars that are already in the country, but why not impose these new regulations on incoming cars brought in from neighbouring countries? I am not being biased here but I think that people from neighbouring countries can easily take their cars back to their country in a matter of days and for JD 20-30 gasoline. This is not the case for me as I need almost \$3,000 for shipping, insurance, etc. One might think of the fact that sooner or later I will be shipping my car back home, but why would I ship it back now when my family and I are not ready to leave (i.e. children in school, husband working) and my resident permit doesn't even expire until October 1995? I wonder whether the Customs Department or anyone in charge has a solution?

Tamara Streaming-Shiyah, Irbid.

Let children live in a better world

To the Editor:

ENCOURAGING, reassuring and exciting is the news that the world has been able to achieve over the past 50 years more than it has achieved over the last two millenniums, according to the United Nations' Fund (UNICEF) 1995 State of the World Children's Report (SWCR). The report, launched simultaneously throughout the world, says life expectancy at birth has increased from 40 years 60 years, infant mortality has dropped from 300 to 100 per 1,000, live births, and children's rights which have remained a taboo until recently, have been recognised by more than 176 countries worldwide.

Yet, the world has a long way to go if it is to achieve the goals accepted by the world leaders at the 1990 World Summit for Children (WSC). The goals cover health, nutrition, education, human rights and water and sanitation-related areas. The report estimates that an additional amount of \$30-\$40 billion will be needed every year until the year 2000 to meet these goals. The SWCR, UNICEF's yearly publication, argues that the amount needed to achieve the 1990s goals for children is as much as the world spends of gold (\$40 billion), and less than half of what it spends on wine (\$85 billion). It also represents one-tenth of the world's spending on tobacco and one-twentieth of what it spends on armament. Therefore, the idea that the world cannot afford this additional amount is absurd and no longer acceptable. If the world is serious about translating its promises to children into action, then it should be able to provide this additional amount to ensure a better world for its children. With the end of the cold war and establishment of peace in our region, part of the enormous amounts of money which were spent on arms of destruction can now be redirected to investments benefiting children, and helping them grow to their full potential as productive and active members of society.

John Azrah, Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

King's letter outlines priorities of government

(Continued from page 1)

ple and helping them achieve their national objectives and asked Sharif Zeid to continue to extend whatever assistance the country could extend to the Palestinians.

The King reiterated his resolve to continue to serve his role as the custodian of the holy shrines in Jerusalem in the name of the Muslim nation "through our best abilities... until (Jerusalem's) status is addressed in a proper and acceptable manner."

Following is a Jordan Times translation of the King's letter of designation to Sharif Zeid:

Dear Brother Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker

Peace be upon you

I send you my affection and deep appreciation, coupled by deep confidence in your person and your loyalty and allegiance. You have always served as my companion even in darkest days since we started the task of building the nation and laying the foundation for its progress as charted by the late King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein.

I have known you throughout the long journey as a young Hashemite with strong resolve as you served as commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces and you have been the right man on whom one can depend whenever the nation required your services to shoulder the difficult responsibilities.

I have entrusted you more than once with the formation of a government in Jordan to help the country out of its crisis and your performance was exemplary, reflecting integrity, sacrifice and efficiency. You have risen to the occasion every time, like any one of the Hashemite family serving your nation and your countrymen.

Now that the country has, with God's grace and with the efforts of its people, overcome a very critical stage in its history during which it enhanced its steadfastness and democracy and sought to regain its land and water rights.

After all this has been accomplished, we find that we are now entering a new stage with new given and new requirements that demand mobilisation of all energies and efforts so that we can deal with what is ahead with vigilance and comprehension so as to complement the construction to consolidate social justice, enhance the sense of tolerance and promote pluralism while we carry out drastic reform in economy, education and public administration.

Based on all this and in the light of the resignation of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, I would like to entrust you with the formation of a new government, hoping it will overcome the difficulties of the present stage aided by whoever you select of efficient and promising personalities to shoulder the heavy responsibilities and to confront the challenges of the coming stage with confidence and capability.

We reaffirm that the government should ensure the rule of the law as a priority and to protect security and ensure stability and to enhance the democratic march within the framework of a strong pluralism and in an atmosphere of tolerance and integrity and to consolidate national unity.

At this stage, when we see people are obsessed by various feelings of optimism or expecting drastic changes in their lives in the era of peace and as we witness some others discouraged as they are not convinced by peace and are acting towards its failure against the will of its steadfast people who had offered so many sacrifices, our people are able to shoulder their responsibilities and confident that they would achieve their objectives in a promising future, with God's help.

We hope that the era of peace would bring with it further stability, power and construction and therefore we at this stage require the creation of the state of institutions with fully modernised legislation and modernised administration with efficient personnel.

We expect the government to encourage the spirit of teamwork in every field and in spreading awareness among the members of the public about their rights and their duty, placing Jordan's highest interests above all other considerations.

Of course, all this requires full commitment to the Constitution and the principles of

the National Charter to ensure equality among people who are true and faithful to their forefathers in raising high the standards of the Great Arab Revolt and who offer refuge to all free and honourable people fleeing injustice and oppression.

Within this same context, the personnel of all our security apparatus who protect the security of the citizen and the safety of the country and abort plots by its enemies should also be provided with what they need to remain able, as we have always known them, to perform their sacred national duty in safeguarding stability and security, utilising the best and most modern techniques, and realising always that our people, to whom they belong and whom they protect, support them and help them in carrying out their duties towards this dear country.

Some of the requirements of the new stage call us to review a lot of our plans in various fields and to adopt planning methods based on well-studied scientific methodology, taking into consideration the needs of the homeland and analysing the dimensions of the problems facing it, and offering solutions to them within our independent national abilities, capabilities and will.

Thus, the youth should be aided and their abilities should be organised and directed in a way benefiting the country, through having organised and studied voluntary works at the level of the whole country. Directing the youth to vocational training and respecting manual work is a national responsibility that we all should give our due care and concern in order to meet the needs of the Jordanian labour market of a growing trained Jordanian force that would be able to replace the expatriate force that has been growing in unacceptable ratios.

There also should be awareness campaigns stressing the need to have the professional associations and unions working in their fields, keeping in mind their basic duties and raison d'être to improve the performance of their members. This work by the associations will be met by the country's gratitude to improving professions and to the job opportunities they provide to their members instead of remaining standstill and repeating political clichés and indulging in work the associations were not originally established to do and which they have no reasons to deal with.

In the fields of education, culture and information, we stress the need to improve the level of education to the best humanitarian conditions and to care for national education which should teach our sons and daughters love rather than fear, to have creative thinking rather than be mere recipients of information, to bolster feelings of belonging rather than be followers and which teach tolerance rather than fanaticism.

Our universities in which we take pride should also be centres promoting freedom of thinking, expression and dialogue, centres for creative scientific research through which Jordanians would enrich the human achievements in science, research and knowledge. Our universities need support to be able to rise to a distinguished level based on quality of high performance and not on achievements based on quantities, which in a lot of cases lack deepness and clarity of vision.

Care of Al Al Bait University should be in the forefront of your government's concerns so as to become, God willing, the centre of light we always wanted for the contemporary Islamic policy in which the best of the nation's scientists, scholars, researchers and students participate.

Regarding culture, the guarantee of the freedom of the intellectual enables him/her to be creative and able to express the thoughts and feelings of the people. Therefore supporting our cultural institutions and providing the means of an honest living and continued care to the creative intellectuals is something we ask you to take into consideration.

In addition, encouraging openness to the world and the cultural and intellectual development in it are basic requirements for the growth of a distinguished Jordanian cultural movement.

The mass media which carry the image of the new Jordan should express the spirit of this country, the march of its people and its democratic

climate as it presents to the nation an example of the best images of the relationship between freedom, consciousness and the defence of the nation's interests. Thus, reconsidering and reevaluating the performance of our media institutions is the first step on the way to building the modern Jordanian information institution that is able to convey the message of this country through a free press attractive by its credibility and balanced reporting the best of the nation's writers and opening satellite, radio and television channels to every pure voice believing in the message of the nation and its future, and enhancing relations between Jordanian expatriates and their homeland and families and conveying to them the role of these dear sons and daughters around the world, raising the country's name everywhere.

Concerning the Jordanian press, it requires that a select group of experts review legislation to ensure its continuous development towards a distinguished level, expressing the spirit and values of the country and keeping away from instigation and demagoguery and everything not conforming to the values and national identity of this people.

As we are keen to protect the freedom of speech, we at the same time affirm our rejection to any trying to harm our democratic march by using this tolerant freedom and by creeping to the ranks of our national march for one purpose or another, prompted by others who harbour ill-feelings towards this country.

Some of them were clear in their determination to distort the image of the country and to continue to undermine its credibility at all levels, contributing to the decline in the quality of printed materials to a level which we fear would, if it continues, create reactions that would harm the freedom of the speech and expression which we are keen to protect. The loss of this and that in this sea of deterioration, in case it occurs, God forbid, would not be representing our people and would have no relation to us at all.

The areas of reform required at this stage include: work towards completing the infrastructure and its modernisation, finalising legislation for the protection of the environment, planning for industry and tourism and organising their needs for development along modern bases and these should be accomplished as soon as possible.

All the aforementioned questions take into consideration also issues that acquire absolute importance at the forefront of which lies the task of confronting and dealing with unemployment and poverty.

This would require the most strenuous efforts within the framework of comprehensive development in economy, investment, and administrative reform and also in creating the climate for the private sector to play its national role in conjunction with the public sector in industry and in agriculture as well as other fields.

There is urgent need to deal with the requirements of the Royal Jordanian (RJ) with a view to consolidating its fleet of aircraft and modernising it so that the national airline can carry out its mission and retain its mission of linking Jordan with the rest of the world serving as ambassador of Jordan to the other nations of the world.

Providing health care to the largest sector of the public, supporting the (institutions) which provide assistance to the needy families, expanding the umbrella of social security, giving due attention to agriculture in the light of the restored Jordanian rights in land and water, and constructing dams and the best and most efficient utilisation of water resources are part of the new government's responsibilities which we hope would be carried out so that the country can benefit from them as a whole.

Comprehensive reform requires distinguished qualified and loyal people who are fully aware of the requirements of the present stage, people who are fully honest and have integrity which would not allow for deviation or tampering with or abusing of public positions at the expense of public interests and rights.

Therefore the reconstruction process which we have announced and the change which we require can never be achieved by wishful think-

ing or overnight. It requires time, effort and perseverance, patience. It also requires security, stability and constructive work with a clear vision and with confidence that we are certain to attain our objectives.

For this to be achieved we must reaffirm that this nation, which God has blessed with the capacity of patience and steadfastness enjoying legitimate leadership, revolution and history and accomplishments, requires from all of us to contribute — each from his or her own position — with all our might to rebuild and defend it and its image and name with the same spirit with which our brave soldiers are defending it along the border, protecting its security and stability.

We want this country's information well defended and its voice carried to all parts of the world in the purest and most beautiful form, reflecting the country's Arab and tolerant Muslim nature. This country deserves a great deal to be talked about as it carries a noble mission and carries out a duty for the whole nation.

We hope that in the coming few years we will attain the complete image of a state of institutions and a state ruled by law with their relations governed by the provisions of the Constitution in such a balance that would not allow one institution to have the upper hand over the other or infringe upon its rights.

Therefore we would like to reaffirm the need to lay the foundation of dialogue and in a climate that allows each party to air its views with freedom and honesty.

The executive authority should handle matters related to the country's needs with developed vision and with efficiency that should not be impeded by bureaucracy and a country where Parliament can play its role monitoring government performance and legislation, and we want the judicial authority to retain its independence which must be supported with all means so that it can carry out its responsibilities.

We thank God for everything that has been achieved for this country through the help of its citizens and we thank God for the bright image Jordan has before the world. We could not have achieved all this without the continued and relentless efforts of the Jordanian citizens — both the migrants and the supporters. This country has always been offering the greatest sacrifices to its nation and honouring its commitments despite its meagre resources and small size.

After the biggest Arab sister country has chosen the path of peace and after we have chosen ours in a general congress, we have moved forth starting from the same point together towards the path of peace, following others who benefitted from this country's umbrella and offering others all services allowing them the right to choose their own way towards peace.

This country had all the right and duty to move towards peace with raised heads and determination and with a clear vision to arrive at peace which it will remain committed to maintain and respect in word and spirit, allowing Jordanians to build a prosperous future.

Peace which has returned to this country restored Jordan's sovereignty over its land and water. It was a peace blessed by God because we wanted to attain just, honorable and comprehensive peace, and regain for the coming generations their rights after decades of sacrifices and sufferings.

We hope that the whole region would reach a just, lasting and comprehensive peace which achieves security to its peoples and enables our people to continue their march on solid foundations under the guidance of the principles and values they are still defending. We also hope this peace would enhance the people's confidence in themselves to be able to counter everyone who does not want this country to remain a glow-

ing Arab star and to continue calling on the Arab people to begin the new age, feeling free, secure and dignified.

We like to stress here that we seek to strengthen the foundations of peace and to make our new and existing international relations steered in a conscious manner within our best capabilities and abilities towards achieving a comprehensive and just peace serving the best of all peoples.

Our keenness in our nation, its freedom, resources, future and independence is something we have committed ourselves to in our historic march. We have participated in its battles against its enemies and sought to mend fences among Arab countries wherever there were disputes and we always were advocates of unity, solidarity and integration among the brethren, seeking to put aside differences and disunity among them with open hearts full of love and affection, without any signs of weakness, negligence and subjugation.

Our efforts to resolve Arab differences within the context of the one Arab home have been incessant. For many times, we have warned of the danger of seditions which emerged in various forms and which made many parts of the Arab World fall victim to hunger, fighting and siege and undermined it in the face of challenges and difficulties.

Our nation is a living one that is able to rise. Its new resurrection should start. We in Jordan seek to be in the front of those calling for its freedom and working to plan for future generations, detached from fear, hunger, fanaticism, and domination by others.

What we would like to focus on at this stage, again, is the issue of Jordan's status in the world and the need to solidify it, enhance relations with other world countries and nations in a way serving the goals of these relations and achieving the best relations of cooperation with them on the basis of mutual respect, to serve the interests of the country, preserve the interests of the nation and to defend righteousness and principles, and thus consequently consolidate Jordan's status, role and presence in the new humanitarian scene.

Our national history was and is still a chain of related links of defending of the rights of the nation, namely the right of the Palestinian people to regain its rights, which we hope its leadership, which has shouldered the responsibility of representing it with the unanimous blessing of the Arabs, will achieve. Here, we stress our keenness to support the Palestinian people and to continue to extend care to the nation's holy sites in Holy Jerusalem through our best abilities to protect this trust in the name of the nation until its status is addressed in a proper and acceptable manner.

As we hope the next government would seek to achieve what was mentioned in this letter in a clear vision and with well-studied plans, specified timetables, and sincere Jordanian determination, we wish you and your colleagues the best of luck in your endeavour, hoping that your efforts will be crowned with success, and waiting to receive the names of your kind colleagues who will shoulder these national and pan-Arab responsibilities with you.

You will find me with you and with this Jordanian people for whom I lived and will live as long as God would want me in this life, working on strengthening its stalwart structure and serving its best interests, glory, pride, stability, security, peace, progress and prosperity, having this duty as the ultimate trust, commitment and honour, rising with all of it, feeling proud of my belonging to the family of God's prophet, may peace be upon him, and to the people of the dear Jordan, the country of my birth. The honour of belonging to them will be a source of pride for me as long as I live. I seek nothing in this world but God's blessing and satisfaction.

Iraq hails close ties with Paris

(Continued from page 1)

follow France's example and recognise Baghdad's progress.

But France's decision was dismissed in Washington by State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelly who said, "now is not the time to make gestures toward Iraq." (see page 2).

Kuwait rejects offer

Kuwait has rejected Baghdad's offer to swap two jailed Kuwaitis for Iraqis sentenced to death in the emirate for trying to kill former U.S. President George Bush, a newspaper said on Saturday.

Sharif Zeid to announce cabinet

(Continued from page 1)

we believe we could accept. It would not be acceptable that our participation be restricted to portfolios that do not correspond to the size and weight of the front," a leading IAF deputy told the Jordan Times.

As consultations were over with most parliamentary blocs by Saturday evening, sources said that the 18-member National Action Front could be represented in the new Cabinet by three deputies, the 10-member Jordanian National Front by two, the 10-member National Democratic Coalition by up to five in addition to independent lawmakers.

But sources said that some parliamentarians were trying to exert pressure to get more of their blocs on Sharif Zeid's team, which is expected to include up to 14 lawmakers.

The National Action Front members who are expected to be in the new cabinet are deputies Abdul Hadi Al Majali (Karak), Rabea Al Sand (Tafilah) and Tawfiq Khashan (Ma'an).

Representatives of the Jordanian National Bloc are expected to be the group's president, Jamal Al Khreisheh (central bedouins) and Mohammad Njadar (southern bedouins). Deputies Samir Kawar (Balqa), Saleh Irshaidat (Irbid), Muneer Souber (Amman), Aref Bataineh (Irbid) and Abdul Karim Kabariti (Aqaba) are expected to be the representatives of the National Democratic Coalition in the new cabinet.

The independent deputies tipped to be in the cabinet are

Ali Abul Al Ragheb (Amman), Samir Habashneh (Karak), Awad Khleifat (Ma'an), Abdul Karim Al Dughum (Ma'an) and Jamal Sarairoh (Karak).

While the sources were reluctant to speculate on the portfolios the possible ministers are expected to hold due to possible last-minute changes, they said that two persons were still being considered for the key foreign affairs portfolio.

They said that it was not decided by Saturday evening whether the portfolio will go to the King's political adviser Marwan Al Qassem or prominent Deputy Kabariti, who heads the Lower House's Foreign Affairs Committee and who played an instrumental role in the passage of the Oct. 26 peace treaty with Israel through Parliament.

The sources expected Sharif Zeid's consultations with lawmakers to end in a satisfactory manner, thus guaranteeing the new cabinet a wider parliamentary base than that of its predecessor.

In a telephone conversation on Thursday, House Speaker Saad Hayel Sour said, the prime minister designate had made clear to him his willingness to develop relations with the House and maintain consultations with its members.

Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports said that Sharif Zeid's cabinet could include two women: Rima Khalaf, minister of industry and trade in the outgoing government, is expected to be moved to the Ministry of Planning, and Salwa Daman-Masri, a senior

official at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, could receive the portfolio of social development.

Sources said that ministers in the outgoing cabinet who are expected to retain their posts are: Samir Khar (transportation), Saleh Irshaidat (water and irrigation), Aref Bataineh (health), Abdul Razzaq Tabeishat (public works), Tawfiq Khashan (municipal and rural affairs and the environment), Salamah Hamad (interior) and Hisham Al-Tel (justice).

Other candidates said to be under consideration for the Interior Ministry were Jamal Shouk, Abdul Hadi Majali and Jamal Khashan.

Taher Hikmat is a possible candidate to assume the Ministry of Justice if Mr. Zeid does not join the new cabinet.

Following are the portfolios that others tipped to be on Sharif Zeid's team could receive:

Ali Abul Ragheb (industry and trade), Abdul Karim Kabariti (foreign affairs or information), Awad Khleifat (youth), Samir Habashneh (agriculture), Jamal Sarairoh or Mohammad Adoub Al Zahen (post and communications), Ibrahim Izzeddine (prime minister affairs and administrative reform), Khaleel Karaki (deputy prime minister and another portfolio) and Ahmad Halayeh (Awarq).

There was no information on the portfolios that Kamel Al Ajlouni, Muneer Souber and Mohammad Abu Olein would receive if they join Sharif Zeid's cabinet.

PLO in Labour win sparks row

(Continued from page 1)

with the PLO, dismissed the report as "rubbish and nonsense."

Talk of such coordination was "the product of an ill-intentioned imagination," he said.

The radio said Mr. Sneh, speaking for Mr. Rabin, had told the PLO that in return for his help the Labour Party was "ready to discuss everything concerning the Palestinian question."

Mr. Arafat and Mr. Abbas replied that "we have received all your messages and will do everything to help you in the elections," the radio said.

The radio added that the secret contacts had been led for the Palestinians by Said Kanaana, a Nabulus businessman and head of a large research centre.

They said he had confirmed the information saying "everything in Abu Mazen's book is true."

Israel, under Mr. Rabin, signed a historic peace accord

with the PLO in September 1993. Abu Mazen was one of the architects of the agreement on Palestinian self-rule.

"The entire story of coordination between us and the PLO is a lie," Mr. Sneh told Israel Radio, referring to the reported contacts in 1992. "(Rabin) did not send me to coordinate anything with the PLO."

He said he had met Mr. Kanaana at Mr. Kanaana's request, in the run-up to the 1992 elections but the talks had not been important.

Mr. Rabin's office and several Labour ministers said they stood behind Mr. Sneh's account.

Mr. Kanaana, in a telephone interview with Reuters, said he and Mr. Sneh had not spoken about internal Israeli politics.

"We discussed the best ways to support the negotiations in Washington," Mr. Kanaana said. "We did not touch on any other subjects, especially those dealing with

Israeli elections."

Dr. Tibi told the news conference in East Jerusalem that references to the Sneh-Kanaana meeting were inserted in the book by one of Abu Mazen's aides without the author's knowledge.

Israel Radio reported that Abu Mazen was currently in Cairo and unavailable for immediate comment.

In Palestinian-ruled Gaza, Mr. Arafat's spokesman denied cooperation with Labour.

"It is a false accusation. Neither the PLO nor the Palestinian Authority have participated in any way against or with any of the Israeli political parties in the elections or in any other matter," Marwan Kanaana said.

Another Mr. Arafat spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeina, accused Israeli radio of "distorting" Abu Mazen's words.

"Abu Mazen's diary has been badly interpreted and what has been published is false," Abu Rudeina said.

Russian general killed in Grozny

(Continued from page 1)

Olga, 28, one of hundreds who braved icy weather to celebrate in central Moscow. The former Soviet authorities had long frowned on Christmas festivities.

Some Russians back the official line that troops were sent into Grozny to wipe out "bandit groups," but most seem shocked by fighting which has killed hundreds of people.

Many Russians questioned by Reuters on Saturday were particularly upset at Mr. Yeltsin's rejection of a plea by his human rights commissioner Sergei Kovalev to declare a ceasefire in time for Christmas.

"I have two sons who are due to do their military service. What if they get sent to Chechnya?" cried Galina, a woman in her fifties.

Mr. Yeltsin himself made no direct mention of Chechnya in the Christmas message he delivered at a ball in the Kremlin, ITAR-TASS news agency said on Saturday.

"This brilliant day has been observed in the world from time immemorial and old Russia celebrated it festively and on a large scale. It is being revived now, as is our homeland, great and much-suffering Russia," it quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, branding the bloodshed in Chechnya "complete madness," led a growing Western chorus of concern at Moscow's attempt to crush Chechen separatism.

Dr. Kohl appealed to President Yeltsin, to silence the guns and seek a negotiated peace.

Mr. Kohl's foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, alluding to speculation in some Western capitals and in Moscow that

Mr. Yeltsin might not be in total control of his military machine, urged the Russian leader to enforce his will over the army.

"We see people suffering, civilians, women and children, we see victims among the soldiers and regard it all as complete madness," Mr. Kohl told Berlin's 100.6 radio station.

"Those who don't see it like that, must have lost all their human emotions."

Bonn and other Western capitals have been guarded in their condemnation of Russia's campaign to suppress the Chechens' three-year bid for autonomy.

But on Saturday, Danish Defence Minister Hans Haackkerup said his government had suspended a defence co-operation pact with Russia because of the attack.

Denmark has already voiced support for an initiative by European Union (EU) External Affairs Commissioner Hans van den Broek to suspend talks on an interim EU trade and partnership accord.

In the Egyptian capital Cairo, U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said he and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak had both expressed concern over the fighting.

"Both the president and I expressed concern about the instability that is being caused by the fighting in Chechnya and by the levels of civilian casualties... there," he said.

U.S. President Bill Clinton, who had kept a low profile since Moscow poured thousands of troops and hundreds of tanks into Chechnya, finally interceded on Friday and urged Mr. Yeltsin in a letter to seek a negotiated settlement.

Both the Netherlands and

France condemned Russia's campaign on Friday and British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd said he had sent a message to Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev expressing his deep concern.

Western diplomats have warned that the bloody assault on the Chechen capital could have incalculable consequences for the future of democracy and for Moscow's economic reforms.

Libya has called for an emergency meeting of Islamic foreign ministers on the conflict raging in Chechnya.

Libya made its request to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) at the beginning of the week and it has been passed to the 51 other members of the pan-Islamic group.

So far they have not given their response, diplomats close to the OIC in its Jeddah headquarters said.

Under the OIC's rules, two-thirds of the membership has to agree to hold an emergency meeting.

At the end of December OIC Secretary General Hamed Almagid called for a negotiated settlement and denounced the "blind and indiscriminate use of weapons on civilian targets."

Though the death of the Russian general and the wounding of the two officers represented a success for the Chechen rebels, who have so far claimed the lives of 256 Russians according to Moscow, the mood in Grozny appeared to be changing Saturday.

The remorseless Russian artillery barrage directed against the centre of the city was beginning to shake the self-confidence of its defenders and they were starting to speak of the possibility that it might fail.

Gulf states may emulate Saudi budget cut—economists

KUWAIT (R)—Other Gulf states are likely to copy Saudi Arabia's planned cuts in government spending and increases in petrol prices in 1995, an economics consultancy said Saturday.

"These measures may encourage other Gulf states to follow suit, as it is customary for these states to imitate or copy each other in policy matters," the Al Shail Consultancy said in a weekly market report.

The consultancy, headed by parliamentary economics adviser Jassim Al Saadoun, called the measures a positive sign.

Most Gulf states have started adopting such measures... it is well known that the subsidy level for these

services is substantial and leads to consumption waste that has rendered some Gulf states unable to undertake investments adequate to meet increasing consumption," it said.

The Saudi budget announced last week cuts spending by 10 billion riyals (\$2.7 billion) to 150 billion (\$40 billion) and raises income by 15 billion (\$4 billion) to 135 billion (\$36 billion).

Economists and diplomats have said that although the spending cut was smaller than the 20 per cent budgeted in 1994, the overall impact was to more than halve the budget deficit.

Kuwaiti newspapers have said the emirate is likely to emulate Saudi's example and

increase charges on public services to help curb its own budget gap, equivalent to a quarter of gross domestic product.

Kuwait's 1994/95 budget entailed a big rise of 20 per cent in the deficit but attempts to curb costs by providing for higher service charges on industry.

The net shortfall is projected at 1,502 billion dinars (\$5 billion), a 23 per cent rise on the originally projected 1993/94 net deficit of 1,223 billion (\$4.1 billion).

Gulf war-related expenses, including repairing damaged oilfields, cost Kuwait tens of billions of dollars and more than halved its once large foreign investment empire.

U.S. sees worsening trade deficit this year

WASHINGTON (R)—The overall U.S. trade deficit is likely to worsen further this year as America's voracious appetite for imports remains strong, the U.S. Treasury Department has said.

"We expect the U.S. trade and current account deficit to continue to widen in 1995, albeit at a declining rate," the treasury said in its semi-annual report to Congress on international economic policy.

The U.S. current account deficit — which measures trade in goods as well as services such as banking — widened to \$90.48 billion in the first 10 months of this year from \$63.67 billion in the like 1993 period.

Besides forecasting a bigger U.S. trade deficit in 1995, the Treasury Department report painted a mostly upbeat

picture of the global economic outlook, with strong growth and modest inflation. The report also absolved China of using its currency to gain an unfair advantage for its goods on world markets, saying that Beijing had made "major strides" in reforming its foreign exchange rate system over the past year. But it also made clear that China needed to do more to liberalize its currency market.

At the same time, the report emphasized again that the U.S. authorities backed a strong dollar, saying it would help keep inflation low and support confidence in financial markets.

"The administration supports a strong dollar," the Treasury said in the closely watched report.

The dollar has lost ground over the past year, although

over the past two months it has shown signs of stabilizing, thanks partly to dollar buying and repeated interest rate increases by the United States.

But it remains vulnerable to sporadic attacks, taking a temporary dip before recovering somewhat, for instance, because of the financial crisis in Mexico.

The Treasury painted an upbeat picture of the outlook for the year for the economies of the Group of Seven — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

"The U.S. position is shared generally among the Group of Seven authorities, who agree that, in prevailing economic conditions, a decline of the dollar is neither justified nor desirable," the report said.

Global recovery is now

well under way, with inflation holding at relatively low levels. Acting Treasury Secretary Frank Newman said in a statement accompanying the report.

The Treasury said that Group of Seven growth should reach close to 3.0 per cent last year and could exceed that rate in 1995.

The continental European economies are recovering, and so too is Japan, although more hesitantly, it said.

As for the United States, the repeated interest rate increases by the Federal Reserve have "begun to show some signs of slowing demand," the Treasury said.

It added that the United States, Canada and Britain will probably see a "very modest increase" in inflation this year, counterbalanced by a steady decline of inflation

in Germany and continued progress in Italy.

That does not mean that the outlook is "without blemishes," it said.

Japan's trade surplus remains high but has started to decline, it said, adding that "a further modest reduction is expected in 1995 as domestic demand strengthens in Japan."

At the same time, the Treasury warned Japan against premature tightening of fiscal and monetary policy which could undermine the country's budding recovery.

The Treasury also said it saw "no evident need" for tighter monetary policy in continental Europe. Unemployment there remains very high and is not expected to fall substantially anytime soon.

U.S. jobless rate tumbles to 5.4%

WASHINGTON (R)—The U.S. unemployment rate unexpectedly tumbled to 5.4 per cent in December, its lowest level in 4½ years, as 1994 ended with the largest number of new jobs generated in a decade, the Labour Department said Friday.

It said the jobless rate fell to 5.4 per cent last month from 5.6 per cent in November.

A total of 256,000 jobs were created outside the farm sector last month after a revised jump of 488,000 in November.

The December jobless rate was the lowest since 1949, when it fell to 4.4 per cent. The unemployment rate has fallen 1.3 percentage points since the start of 1994.

The November rise in payroll jobs was the biggest since October 1987, when 550,000 jobs were created. The November rise previously was reported as 350,000.

The department said a total of 3.5 million jobs were created outside the farm sector in 1994, the biggest yearly increase since a jump of 3.9 million in 1984.

New jobs were added last month in manufacturing and at bars and restaurants and a variety of other establishments.

Wages rose a moderate 0.3 per cent in December, a further sign that inflation pressures remain in check.

The report adds to evidence the economy ended 1994 with a burst of strength. But economists expect growth will slow in the first quarter of 1995 as the six interest-rate hikes engineered by the Federal Reserve (Fed) last year take hold.

Economists expect the Fed will vote to raise rates again when its policy arm meets at the end of January in a bid to slow the economy.

China orders nationwide anti-piracy boycott

BEIJING (R)—Beijing has ordered a nationwide boycott of pirated goods, intensifying a campaign in an attempt to avert a potentially disastrous trade war with Washington over theft of intellectual property in China.

China also will amend its three-year-old copyright law in 1995 to "adapt (it) to the changing situation," the official Xinhua news agency quoted a state copyright administration spokesman as saying.

The "changing situation" appeared to be a codeword for what Washington alleges is the proliferating piracy of copyrights, patents and trademarks by Chinese firms — many of them government owned and operated.

"The (copyright law) amendment will bring coordination between protecting owners of foreign copyrights and their Chinese counterparts, and will serve to protect some new rights," Xinhua said without giving details.

Piracy is central to a deepening rift between Beijing and Washington, which on Dec. 31 threatened to punish China with stiff tariffs on \$2.8 billion worth of its exports from Feb. 4 unless it acts to address U.S. concerns.

China pledged tit-for-tat sanctions against U.S. goods if the U.S. tariffs are imposed, raising the spectre of a Pacific trade war that would damage both countries. Hong Kong and other interdependent economies.

U.S. negotiators last month broke off talks aimed at ending the crisis, saying China had made no serious offers. New talks are expected before the February deadline.

With the talks on hold, the state-run media have mounted a broad publicity

campaign to defend China's position — that it has made rapid progress against piracy but cannot be expected to wipe out the scourge overnight.

But the state copyright administration went a step further in calling for a nationwide boycott of businesses "suspected of engaging in piracy," acknowledging the government's failure to educate the public about intellectual property rights.

"China has established an advanced copyright protection system, but ordinary people are still lacking in copyright awareness," allowing pirates to thrive, the spokesman said.

"More and more people will see the long-term benefits as they become aware of the fact that it is (China) and they themselves who will suffer the effects of piracy in the end," he said.

Washington has de-

nounced Beijing's failure to close 29 South China plants, some state-owned, that have been pressing 75 million pirated compact discs a year, largely for export.

China countered Wednesday that it had seized 1.38 million pirated books and 2.2 million bootleg CDs last year.

The official legal daily said Wednesday that authorities had closed a Beijing bookstore for "rectification" after finding that it had pirated tens of thousands of copies of Hong Kong published works.

The boycott campaign will urge citizens to report suspected copyright pirates promptly to the authorities. They will not have to look far. Pirated CDs, books, computer software, videotapes can be found readily at street stalls and even in state shops in most major Chinese cities.

U.S. publishers, film studios, software firms and other copyright owners have calculated that their industry loses \$827 million a year to Chinese pirates.

Xinhua questioned the sincerity of the alleged losses, saying U.S. firms had filed only 20 copyright infringement suits with Beijing's intellectual property court and that only two had been handled by the copyright agency.

Losses are not limited to copyrighted works. China has launched repeated campaigns against pirates who counterfeit almost any kind of product that is in consumer demand — whether it is of foreign or local origin.

Bootleg copies of Rolex watches, the famous Chinese banquet liquor Moutai, Lux soap bars, Tabasco chili sauce and even Chevrolet-model jeeps have been seized in the crackdowns.

Greenfield Asia Securities, said a widening in the current account deficit would be no surprise or cause for concern because of the big investment approvals Indonesia recorded last year.

The government approved foreign-investment projects worth \$23.7 billion for the year to Dec. 15, triple the figure of \$8 billion in 1993, which is expected to cause a surge in the import of capital equipment.

The current account deficit was likely to widen by March, 1995, to \$4.09 billion from \$3.59 billion in 1994-95, the finance ministry said.

Turkey signs memorandum to buy Qatari gas

DOHA (R)—Turkey, which needs natural gas to feed its national pipeline network, is to buy liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar for 25 years under a memorandum of understanding the two countries signed Saturday.

Turkey's Energy Minister Veysel Atasoy, who arrived in Doha Friday, signed the memorandum with Qatari Energy Minister Abdullah Al Attiyah for two million tonnes a year of LNG and an option for two million tonnes more.

It "will be converted into a letter of intent (on Sunday) when Botas and Rasgas initial the agreement," Mr. Attiyah told reporters. The first shipment could start in the middle of 1998.

Qatar has well-developed plans for two huge LNG projects, one of which is already being built. The second — Ras Laffan Liquefied Gas Co. (Rasgas), the one that would supply Turkey — is still at the stage of signing up long-term customers.

Rasgas will sign the letter of intent with Botas, Turkey's state pipeline company which buys and transports gas.

Rasgas is designed to produce 10 million tonnes of LNG at a cost of about \$9 billion but would probably start with a smaller version which could be expanded. It is due to go on stream in mid-1998 or early 1999 if enough agreements are signed.

Indonesia's budget praised amid fears of inflation

JAKARTA (R)—Economists have praised Indonesia's budget, handed down Thursday, for its caution but warned of higher inflation following wage increases for civil servants and workers.

"This is wishful thinking. Already there are inflationary pressures in the private sector while trying to spread expenditures more evenly across infrastructure projects, education and irrigation."

The budget is for the financial year from this April 1 to March 31, 1996.

"It is a very tight budget. There is no change in real terms," Anwar Nasution, an economics lecturer at the University of Indonesia told Reuters.

But economists voiced fear inflation pressure would increase after the government announced a 10 per cent rise in civil servants' salaries after an earlier announcement to raise minimum wages for

workers by up to 35 per cent.

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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 1995
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: All day and the evening as well requires caution and care in all that you do. It isn't a day to seek or expect the cooperation of others and you would be wise to go along with the plans of your mate even though it isn't what you want to do.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Home is fine in the morning, but after lunch, be careful of disagreements or other tensions. Weed out your wardrobe for some new styles.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get into philosophical studies in the morning. This is not a good day for travel. But get your car in better order, clean it completely.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Some financial problem may arise after breakfast, so plan how to handle it wisely. Be economical in your purchasing and have some extra funds.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make plans for the future since the afternoon can bring tensions and delays. This is a very good day to be social with friends.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You can handle any quick decisions which have to be made, but take under advisement any important issues which may arise in your life.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A good friend could be helpful in the morning, but later do not seek favours from anyone. Avoid disagreements with close friends and loved ones.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Handle an outside affair early, but later stay at home and avoid any outside altercations. Rely pretty much on yourself for answers.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You have a clever idea in the morning which can be put to great use, so carry through with it. Avoid the social scene tonight.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You can be very happy with your mate in the morning, but later you have duties to perform and get at them without haste.

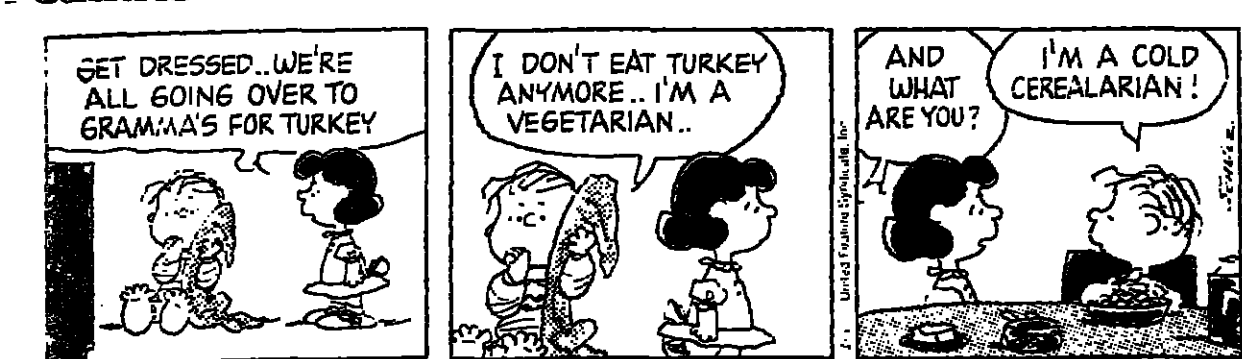
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Concentrate on agreements made early in the morning, then you will avoid criticism later. A pleasurable situation will arise.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Some service you render or is completed for you can begin the day pleasantly. The evening can be charming spent with your loved ones.

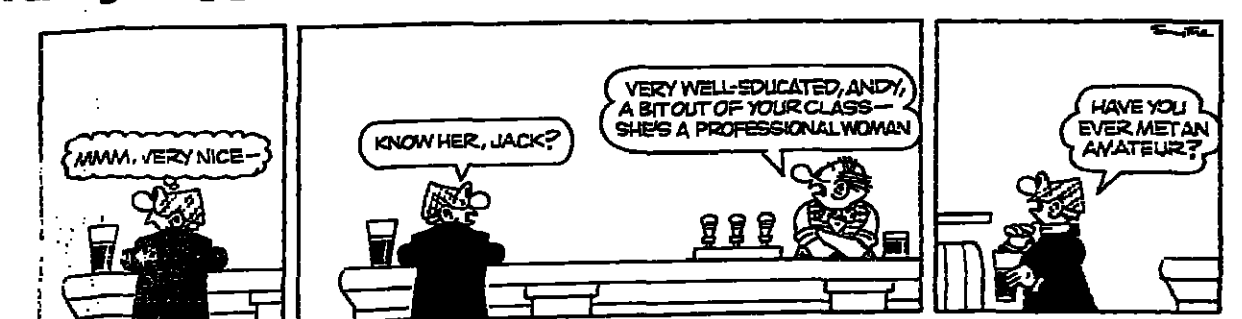
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Early be sure to accept some invitation which comes your way. Improve your appearance by changes in your wardrobe. Be charming in the evening.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

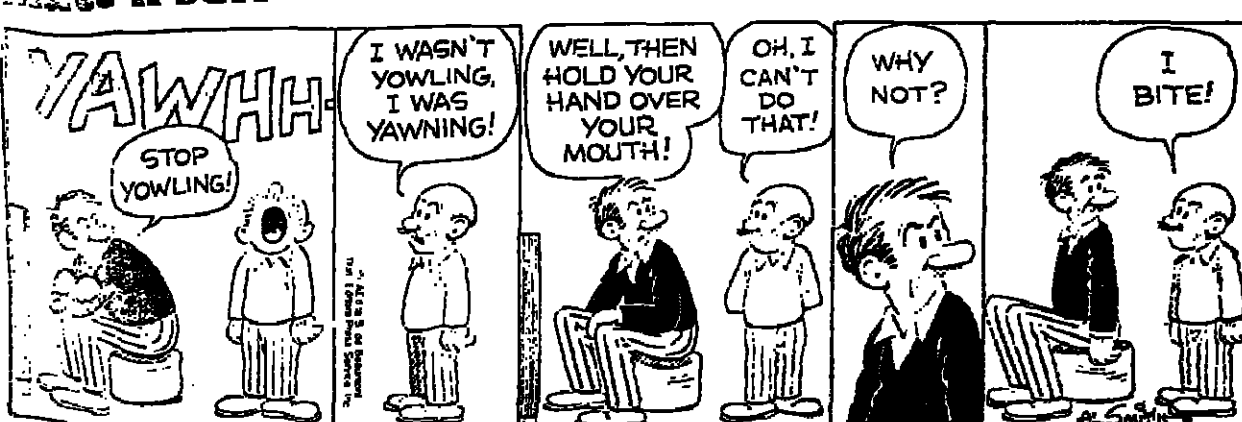
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Watt'n' Jeff



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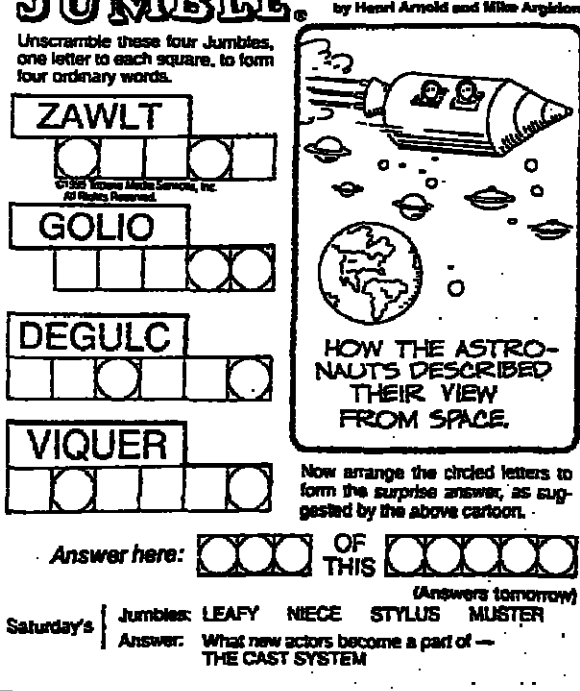
THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen



JUMBLE.

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



THE Daily Crossword by Manny Miller



business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Super bank reportedly in the offing

Big strides have been made towards establishing a huge Jordanian bank with an authorised JD 100 million capital. According to a known economic expert who prepared the feasibility study, there is enough need and justification to set up the bank in light of local, regional and international developments. The head of the founding committee, who requested anonymity, said the paid-up capital is expected to reach JD 50 million during the first five years with the founders covering 75 per cent of the capital and the remaining 25 per cent to be floated for public subscription. Pointing out that more than 4,000 new companies were set up in 1994 and that the volume of investments at the primary market of the Amman Financial Market hit a record JD 430 million last year, he said Jordanian banks, except for the Arab Bank, had relatively limited capital and their services were below the level provided by many Arab and other banks in the region. The head of the founding committee said the bank would have more products and services to contribute to the banking industry and that would be the key to obtain a licence from the central bank which recently made it clear that no new banks will be licensed unless they can provide new banking services that would constitute a tangible, accretion of the Kingdom's banking industry. The committee reportedly has many offers from expatriates and Gulf Arabs, as well as Japanese, South Korea, European and American investors to hold shares in the proposed bank (Al Rai).

The Ministry of Post and Communications reminds all subscribers to a post office box to renew their subscriptions before the end of January. Delays beyond the end of this month will carry a 50 per cent fine of the subscription fee for three months after which subscriptions will be severed (Al Dustour).

Complaints have reportedly increased from hotels in Amman, Aqaba and Petra that Israeli tourists have stolen many properties and ornaments (Al Dustour).

During a meeting between representatives of the commercial sector and the mayor of the Greater Amman Municipality, nearly a dozen issues were brought up for discussion. The topics were: (1) removing garages from the Mahatta street; (2) having merchants whose business has nothing to do with health pay health fees; (3) issuing violation tickets for minor offences and not allowing enough time for redressing other violations; (4) metal barriers downtown; (5) reducing charges for road signs; (6) street vendors; (7) double inspections from various government authorities; (8) parking of "service" taxis; (9) exhibition; (10) building a tunnel at Al Sharq Al Awsat intersection; (11) licensing restaurants and (12) store awnings (Al Aswaj).

Economist and columnist Faded Fanek said in a speech at Al Watan Party headquarters that Israeli imports are sixfold Jordan's imports while their exports are 10 times higher than ours. But, he added, because of high inflation, the per capita income in Israel does not really exceed five times the per capita income in Jordan. He dismissed fears of Israelis rushing to invest in Jordan because any investor would expect at least a 20 per cent return on his investment. However, Dr. Fanek expected the Israelis to be interested in hotel investments in Jordan as this sector is expected to boom in the future (Al Aswaj).

Japanese banks dispose of \$207b in bad debts

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese city banks have spent 2,072 billion yen (\$207 billion) in removing bad loans from their books since March 1993 with Mitsubishi Bank Ltd. leading the pack, a news agency has reported. Jiji Press said Mitsubishi spent 323 billion yen in transferring bad debts to the bank-owned Cooperative Credit Purchasing Co., followed by Sakura Bank Ltd. with 287 billion yen and Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank Ltd. with 253 billion yen. The report by Jiji also said that if recent trends continued, all of Japan's 11 city banks, except Bank of Tokyo Ltd., would soon approach limits in disposing of bad loans, requiring the finance ministry to relax lending guidelines. Japanese banks currently lend funds to the cooperative credit company to acquire their non-performing loans and the exposures of 10 banks to the agency currently range from between seven per cent and 15 per cent of their capital. But the banks are not

allowed to lend any more than 20 per cent of their capital to a single borrower and many want the limit to be raised to 30 per cent to enable bad loan disposals to be accelerated, the news agency said.

Sauwa Bank Ltd. ranked fourth among the city banks with its disposals of bad loans totalling 247 billion yen followed by Sumitomo Bank Ltd. with 246 billion yen, Fuji Bank Ltd. with 208 billion yen, Tokai Bank Ltd. with 182 billion yen and Asahi Bank Ltd. with 177 billion yen.

Among smaller amounts were 89 million yen by Daiwa Bank Ltd., 37 billion yen by Hokkaido Tokai Bank Ltd. and 22 billion yen by Bank of Tokyo Ltd.

The report, which quoted unidentified financial sources, said the country's three long-term credit banks accounted for a further 335 billion yen while its seven trust banks accounted for 315 billion yen.

The agency said in November that its total acquisitions, including bad loans

from other institutions such as regional banks, amounted to 3,161 billion yen, indicating that the city banks account for two thirds of the total.

The face value of the 3,849 bad loans was 6,748 billion yen, the agency said, indicating a discount of more than 53 per cent.

Meanwhile, Japanese bank profits for the six months to September dropped 16.9 per cent from a year earlier to a combined 789.5 billion yen (\$79 billion) as bad loan write-offs accelerated, an industry group has said.

The Federation of Bankers Associations of Japan said the decline in pre-tax earnings among the 150 banks reflected aggressive moves to get non-performing loans off their balance sheets.

A spokesman for the federation said the combined write-offs came to 2,033 billion yen during the first half, up 69.5 per cent from a year earlier.

Japan's 11 city banks suffered the sharpest declines in earnings. As a group, their profits before tax plunged 40.7 per cent from a year earlier to a combined 233 billion yen, the federation said.

The profits of the country's seven trust banks dropped 22.9 per cent to a combined 48.7 billion yen while the earnings of three long-term credit banks were down 20.1 per cent to a combined 58.1 billion yen.

Regional banks posted a better performance with the pre-tax earnings of first-tier regional banks climbing eight per cent to a combined 354 billion yen. The profits of second-tier regional banks grew three per cent during the same period to a combined 95.6 billion yen, the federation said.

Algeria forecasts oil exports to earn \$9.2b

TUNIS (R) — Algeria expects its earnings from oil and gas exports to rise to \$9.2 billion this year from \$8.7 billion in 1994, according to finance ministry figures reported by the official Algerian news agency.

The North African country's oil and gas exports account for more than 90 per cent of its foreign currency earnings and brought in \$9.8 billion in 1993.

The government, in a \$3.6 billion deficit budget for

1995, envisaged an average price for Algerian oil of \$16 a barrel against \$16.1 in 1994.

The figures showed that the deficit will represent 8.3 per cent of gross domestic product, estimated at 1,780.4 billion dinars (\$43.4 billion), at the government budget exchange rate of 41 dinars per \$1.

Oil and gas taxes represent 51.3 per cent of the \$86.5 billion dinars (\$14.3 billion) expected budget revenues, against 734.9 billion dinars (\$17.9 billion) expenses.

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 07/01/1995					
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	NEW CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE
ARAB BANK	1240	238613	183.500	183.750	+0.250
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	18873	83249	4.240	4.250	+0.010
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	19434	81842	4.040	4.170	+0.130
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	5150	8549	1.660	1.660	0.000
THE HOUSING BANK	72000	413302	5.690	5.740	+0.050
JORDAN KOWAT BANK	1538	4615	2.990	3.000	+0.010
JORDAN GULF BANK	16200	27281	1.620	1.680	+0.060
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	31669	130004	3.750	3.750	0.000
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	28700	135170	5.000	5.100	+0.100
SEIT KHALIL SAVINGS/INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	1050	3419	3.210	3.270	+0.060
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	128500	199606	1.530	1.540	+0.010
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT / JORDAN	300	1197	3.900	3.990	+0.090
WELFARE INVESTMENT BANK	8535	15037	1.720	1.730	+0.010
BANKS SECTOR	331189	1322888	INDEX NUMBER: 159.38	CHANGE: +0.431	
ADAMIAN SEAS INSURANCE	1500	3000	2.000	2.000	0.000
JORDAN FIRE INSURANCE	250	619	2.470	2.470	0.000
ARAB UNION INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE	250	718	3.020	2.870	-0.150
INSURANCE SECTOR	2000	4337	INDEX NUMBER: 138.21	CHANGE: -0.001	
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	17200	27176	1.570	1.570	0.000
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	28000	42643	1.520	1.520	0.000
JORDAN KIDDS KIDDS	250	730	2.780	2.820	+0.040
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	9650	49119	4.950	5.080	+0.130
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	19850	65963	3.200	3.300	+0.100
THE HOUSING BANK SECURITIES	15400	97171	2.420	2.500	+0.080
JORDAN GULF REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	31125	41896	1.290	1.320	+0.030
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	200	210	1.020	1.080	+0.060
MACHINERY EQUIP. REPAIRING & MAINTENANCE	340	289	7.500	7.700	+0.200
JORDAN POWER FOUNDATION / ALBA	800	13138	15.000	12.800	-2.200
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMERCE HOTELS	18100	45279	2.470	2.500	+0.030
SERVICES SECTOR	140915	322684	INDEX NUMBER: 136.13	CHANGE: +0.001	
ACTAQUEST CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	650	899	1.370	1.370	0.000
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	79917	238847	2.910	2.950	+0.040
JORDAN FERTILISER INDUSTRIES	1327	1327	2.960	3.000	+0.040
THE ARAB FERTILISER / NEW	450	2475	5.450	5.500	+0.050
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	38128	37934	9.840	9.800	-0.040
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	358	1518	4.200	4.250	+0.050
THE JORDAN WOODSTOCKS	4717	38259	7.800	8.050	+0.250
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	29000	103335	5.530	5.760	+0.230
THE JORDAN TYPES MANUFACTURING	650	1801	2.740	2.770	+0.030
JORDAN PAPER & CARBON FACTORIES	163	710	4.200	4.200	0.000
THE PUBLIC HEATING	103	309	3.040	3.000	-0.040
SPINNING & WEAVING	1345	1345	2.680	2.690	+0.010
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	2500	12500	2.500	2.500	0.000
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	79500	85860	1.050	1.070	+0.020
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRIES	2330	17235	7.150	7.500	+0.350
ALUMINUM INDUSTRIES	9500	97029	1.020	1.050	+0.030
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	23150	34477	1.490	1.470	-0.020
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRIES	12300	12300	4.250	4.250	0.000
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	1200	3578	2.950	2.820	-0.130
JORDAN POWER FOUNDATION / ALBA	2300	3502	1.520	1.550	+0.030
ALADIN INDUSTRIES	1800	8090	4.340	4.550	+0.210
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JMCO	30850	26770	0.870	0.860	-0.010
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	5650	30493	5.300	5.380	+0.080
JORDAN CABLE INDUSTRIES	1050	2135	2.020	2.030	+0.010
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	3750	10580	2.770	2.800	+0.030
KANTHER INVESTMENT	11600	20978	1.800	1.820	+0.020
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	13550	58256	4.250	4.260	+0.010
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	600	1386	2.300	2.310	+0.010
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	406092	972834	INDEX NUMBER: 131.66	CHANGE: +0.421	
GRAND TOTAL	880196	2622740	INDEX NUMBER: 146.17	CHANGE: +0.813	
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 406195					
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 488762					

Iraqis urged not to hoard food

BAGHDAD (R) — A rush on staple foods has sent prices soaring in Iraq and a cabinet minister advised Iraqis Friday against hoarding and urged traders not to exploit the high demand for yet another hike. Baghdad traders said sugar was in great demand following a government decision this week to slash sugar ration by one third, the second reduction in ration in less than six months. Iraqis will now receive 500 grammes a month of sugar each instead of 750. Last year the government reduced food rations, distributed at giveaway prices, by as much as half.

There is nothing to worry and push the citizen to buy and hoard any of the food items on the rationing card," Hussein Kamel Hassan, minister of industry and minerals, was quoted in Baghdad newspapers as saying.

He said the government had no plans for further cuts in rations which provide less than half of each person's needs for sugar, tea, rice, flour and cooking oil.

Traders said the rush on food was spurred by rumours that the government, short of foreign cash to buy food, might announce big slashes in food rations.

Food prices on the market rose sharply as the Iraqi dinar tumbled against the U.S. dollar.

This week prices of essen-

tial foods soared. A box of 30 eggs jumped from 1350 dinars to 1650, about the average monthly salary of a junior government clerk in Iraq. Following Mr. Hassan's remarks, sugar slumped to 450 dinars from 525.

Traders said a visit by Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to Paris, which was seen as a clear sign of warming relations between the two countries, halted the hikes, albeit temporarily.

Mr. Hassan said huge quantities of sugar were on the way to Iraq this month and that the slash in food rations was only a temporary measure. He did not elaborate.

"Any positive or negative statement affects our volatile market. We are in an awkward situation," a trader said.

Mr. Hassan warned that the state will not remain idle in the face of illegal hoarding and profiteering by traders, who if convicted may face the death sentence.

Baghdad traders said the dinar had stabilised following a sharp slump this week. The dollar was hovering at 665 dinars to the U.S. dollar. It fetched 540 two weeks ago.

Iraq is under U.N. trade sanctions imposed because of its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The council is scheduled to review the embargo by mid-January and traders said they were now taking a "wait-and-see" attitude.

Japanese firms reduce unaccounted-for spending

TOKYO (R) — Japanese firms used less cash for "unaccounted-for spending" — a bookkeeping category that includes bribes to politicians or payoffs to gangsters — in the year to June, Tokyo tax authorities have said.

Unaccounted outlays by companies shrank by 10.9 per cent to 53 billion yen (\$530 million) after a record year in 1992-93, the National Tax Administration Agency said.

The construction industry, notorious for bribing politicians in exchange for lucrative public works contracts, was again the leading spender.

It accounted for almost three quarters of the shadowy outlays by the firms audited, the agency said.

Contractors were followed by manufacturers of

medical products, wholesalers and retailers — according to results from a tax agency inquiry into 4,746 companies, each capitalised at 100 million yen (\$1 million) or more.

Of the 53 billion yen, tax authorities were able to identify the spending purpose of only 13.7 billion yen (\$137 million). This included 2.6 billion yen (\$26 million) donated to politicians and 7.4 billion yen (\$74 million) to cover entertainment and other social expenses.

It was not clear whether the decline in unaccounted-for spending was because firms were chastened by the series of recent bribery scandals or merely squeezed by the prolonged recession that has plagued Japan.

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Steffi Graf

Graf to miss Australian Open Sanchez-Vicario could take top spot

BOCA RATON, Florida (AFP) — Steffi Graf dropped out of the Australian Open Thursday, opening the door for Spain's Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario to take the WTA world number one ranking with a title at the Grand Slam event.

Graf, the reigning number one from Germany, said Thursday she would not compete in this month's Grand Slam event because of a strained calf muscle in her right leg.

"It's very frustrating," Graf said. "It's not the way I wanted to start 1995."

The Australian Open begins January 16. Graf, who won her fourth Australian crown last year, plans to begin her 1995 WTA schedule at Tokyo in an event that starts the day after the Open final.

On that day, Graf will

not own a Slam title for the first time since 1987, when she won her first major by capturing the French Open crown.

Sanchez-Vicario, now ranked second, could take the world top spot by winning in Australia. Combined with the points Graf will lose, the U.S. Open champion will need to earn 665 points to take the top ranking.

Sanchez-Vicario would receive 520 points for winning in Australia plus "quality points" for beating ranked players in the tournament. She would need to face and vanquish three or four ranked foes to compile enough quality points to overtake Graf, so early upsets would work against her quest.

A back injury bothered Graf most of last year, but the Germany ace had solved that problem with

therapy and training.

"My back has been going very well. I got rid of my back pain," Graf said. "(The leg injury) happened during practice while I was running for a shot. I had to take off for nine days until it went away totally."

"Maybe I tried to do a little too much."

Graf, who lost the U.S. Open final to Sanchez-Vicario, has played only at the season-ending WTA championships last November since the Open. She remained in Florida to work out rather than return home to Germany.

"I'm very eager (to return). That's why I stayed here," Graf said.

Graf was upset in the first round at Wimbledon by Lori McNeil last year and fell to Mary Pierce in the French Open semifinals.

Argentina play Japan today

RIYADH (R) — Argentina's coach Daniel Passarella is likely to field a second-string team for his side's opening Intercontinental Cup match against Japan Sunday.

"We have to play two matches within 48 hours and after sizing up our opponents I'll make a decision on what team to field," he told reporters.

After watching Nigeria beat Japan 3-0 in the opening Group B match in Riyadh Friday, Passarella is more likely to use his top players against the Nigerians Tuesday.

Argentina are defending champions in the competition, which features the five champions of FIFA's continental federations plus the Saudi Arabian hosts.

European representatives Denmark play their first game in Group A against Saudi Arabia Sunday, reinforced by the late arrival of both Brian Laudrup, the Glasgow Rangers winger and Johnny Hansen of Odense.

Mexico beat Saudi Arabia 2-0 in the first Group A match Friday.

Nigeria, the poorest of the six nations, defeated Japan 3-0 in the five-million dollar competition as Japan played some quality football, but Nigeria's World Cup experience proved decisive in this event.

Samson Siasia, Mutiu Adepoju and Daniel Amokachi scored the goals for a country which perhaps most badly needs the 1.5 million-dollar winners' check.

Earlier in Group A, Mexico won 2-0 against hosts Saudi Arabia.

Two goals from second-half substitute Luis Garcia gave Mexico the win over hosts Saudi Arabia in the opening match of the event Friday.

The result put the Concacaf champions in top place in Group A in the six-nation tournament.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

United bid to keep Cantona till 2000

MANCHESTER (AFP) — Frenchman Eric Cantona will shortly be offered a contract worth 2.5 million pounds to keep him at Manchester United until the year 2000, according to a newspaper report. Cantona, whose present contract expires next year, is set for an improved four-year deal that will ensure the 28-year-old French captain finishes his playing days in England, according to the Daily Mirror. United chairman Martin Edwards is quoted as saying: "Put it this way, you won't need to worry about his situation for another three or four more years. We will sit down with him soon and discuss the new arrangement." Cantona, who has announced his wish to stay with the English champions, would join Alan Shearer and Chris Sutton as the highest paid footballers in Britain if he accepts the offer.

Stoltenberg back in Davis Cup team

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Australia's top ranked player, Jason Stoltenberg, was recalled Friday to his country's Davis Cup squad for next month's first round World Group tie against South Africa in Durban. A shoulder injury forced Stoltenberg to miss the relegation play-off victory over New Zealand in Christchurch last September. Stoltenberg, at 20 Australia's highest ranked player, joins Pat Rafter (No. 21), Mark Woodforde (No. 43), Richard Fromberg (No. 59) and Todd Woodbridge (No. 91) in the squad for the tie on February 3-5.

NHL faces 'apocalypse'

NEW YORK (AFP) — Little hope of a settlement is seen as National Hockey League (NHL) owners prepare to meet to decide the fate of a season shutdown for more than three months in a labour dispute. The NHL could become the first U.S. league ever to lose an entire season over a labour dispute. Baseball was hit by a strike that allowed no 1994 champion to be declared. Players gave what they termed a "final proposal" to owners this week, with a vote on the plan. "I have talked to 10 teams today and they all said it was not acceptable," Anaheim Mighty Ducks general manager Jack Ferreira said. "It definitely will be rejected." Should the plan fail, owners could end the season or make a final bid for a deal in the last hours before the entire campaign would have to be scrapped.

Ivanisevic gets a clearance

PERTH (AFP) — Croatian tennis star Goran Ivanisevic, who had been under the cloud of injury, has been cleared to take part in the Australian Open starting in Melbourne January 16. There were fears he could be forced to miss the event after complaining of right knee soreness during an exhibition match here Sunday as part of the Hopman Cup mixed teams' event. But Hopman Cup director Paul McNamee said that Ivanisevic had been cleared by a Perth specialist to resume practice. "He had an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) examination which revealed a small tear," McNamee said. "He has responded well to treatment, has full movement and no inflammation or swelling," he added. Ivanisevic travels to Melbourne to continue preparations for the Open.

Paris St. Germain into last 16

PARIS (R) — A 73rd minute goal by midfielder Vincent Guerin put French champions Paris St. Germain into the last 16 of the League Cup as they beat Auxerre 1-0. The Parisian side, missing regular first-teamer Rivaldo of Brazil and Liberto George Weah, created few chances against last season's French Cup winners. But Guerin provided the winner with a left-foot shot from the edge of the box after a Patrick Colliette cross was only partially cleared by Daniel Gneretro.

Pierce's father has new pupil

MIAMI (AFP) — Mary Pierce's father, banned from WTA matches for his past disruptive acts, is training a new German tennis prodigy whose father hopes to end Jim Pierce's blacklist status on the women's circuit. Pierce has been hired to coach 14-year-old Marlene Weingartner, who plans to play in development events and as a qualifier at WTA events. This is Pierce's first pupil other than his daughter Mary, who split from her father two years ago and climbed into the sport's elite afterwards. "He's a very experienced coach. He made Mary," said Joseph Weingartner, who plans to speak with the WTA about rescinding the ban on Pierce.

Holyfield fulfills dying child's dream

HOUSTON (AFP) — Former world heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield fulfilled the dying wish of a 12-year-old boy with a visit here just hours before the child died of an incurable blood ailment. "I'm so thankful he got a chance to see me because that's what he said his wish was," Holyfield said. "All this little boy wanted was to see me." Tabarric Gentry died Monday, just hours after a hospital visit from his sports idol. "People had been telling me this for a long time," Holyfield said. "Because of my busy schedule, I hadn't gotten to come to Houston before." Holyfield lost his world titles last year and was later found to have a heart ailment. After surgery to correct the defect, Holyfield has been pronounced fit to fight, even though he faces a crowded path of heavyweight title contenders in his quest to regain the crown.

Million-dollar setback hits PACT 95

SAN DIEGO (AFP) — America's Cup defender hopeful PACT 95 expects "Young America" will start the yachting competition in one week as scheduled despite tornado damage that cost one million dollars to fix. "Things weren't broken. They were disintegrated," skipper Kevin Mahoney said after a storm ripped through the PACT 95 compound and damaged their week-old boat. The trailer lasted only 30 seconds, but demolished a sail loft and blew sails into the water, sending one 1.6 km away. Hull shell damage came when the ship was knocked sideways in its cradle preparing for launch.

Yeboah has final say on transfer

BONN (R) — English Premier League club Leeds United agreed terms with Germany's Eintracht Frankfurt Friday for the transfer of star striker Anthony Yeboah, but the Ghanaian was given until Monday to consider Leeds's pay offer, the German sports agency SID said. SID said Eintracht business manager Bernd Hockstein had agreed with Leeds that the final shape of the deal would depend on the personal terms agreed with Yeboah. The 26-year-old Ghanaian, joint top scorer in the Bundesliga for the last two seasons, could either be sold for around \$5.8 million or loaned to Leeds until the end of 1995 for \$1.6 million.

Maradona jailed for an hour

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Diego Maradona was jailed for an hour after judge Julio Campora rejected Maradona's explanation for violating a court order. The court order stated Maradona must not leave the country without permission as required by his sentence for shooting an air rifle at journalists outside his house last summer. But Maradona, who travelled to Paris after receiving a medal from Fidel Castro in Cuba, was not granted such permission. Campora ruled Maradona had broken his bail conditions and sent him to jail. But an hour later, Maradona was freed after securing another bail agreement.

Villa complete record double deal

LONDON (R) — Aston Villa completed their biggest ever transfer deal when they signed two players from first division Derby County, Tommy Johnson and Gary Charles, for a combined fee of 2.9 million pounds (\$4.54 million). Both players have signed 3½-year contracts with the Premier League side with an option of a further 12 months. Johnson is a 23-year-old striker while Charles has been described by Little as the best young full-back in the country. Villa are fourth from bottom of the Premier League, a position which would bring relegation at the end of the season.

BAF rejects Modahl call for public appeal

LONDON (R) — The British Athletic Federation (BAF) rejected a call by middle-distance runner Diane Modahl for her appeal against a four-year ban for a doping offence to be held in public. "Our hearings — and those of other sports — are always held in private," BAF spokesman Tony Ward said. "They will continue to be so. It would set an unnecessary precedent if we did otherwise." Modahl's solicitor, Tony Morton-Hopner, had insisted the case was of great public interest and of importance to the sporting world. "The BAF rule book does not require meetings to be in private," he said.

Deportivo loan Kostadinov to Bayern Munich

LA CORUNA, Spain (R) — Leading Spanish club Deportivo Coruna have loaned Bulgarian striker Emil Kostadinov to Bayern Munich of Germany, with an option to buy at the end of the season. A Deportivo statement said agreement for the move was reached Friday night between Coruna Chairman Augusto Cesar Lendoiro and Bayern deputy chairman Karl Heinz Rummenigge. Kostadinov, who helped Bulgaria to the semifinals of the 1994 World Cup, came to Deportivo in the first weeks of this season on loan from Portuguese club Porto. But he has not commanded a regular spot in Deportivo's starting line-up.

9 police injured at Marseille match

MARSEILLE (R) — Nine policemen were injured in clashes with Marseille supporters during a soccer match in the French Mediterranean port Friday, police said. Former European champions Marseille were trailing 2-0 towards the end of the match against Nancy when angry supporters threw missiles onto the pitch and attacked police. Referee Georges Ramos stopped the match but fights resumed outside the stadium, where fans destroyed a bus stop and several police vehicles. "The supporters said 10 people were arrested, Marseille were relegated to the second division following accusations they bribed opponents Valenciennes to 'throw a key' league match in May 1993."

Champion jockey Dunwoody faces ban

LONDON (R) — British champion jump jockey Richard Dunwoody has been ordered to appear before the Jockey Club after he was found guilty of improper riding during a race at Uttoxeter Friday. Dunwoody could now face a severe riding ban after he appeared to deliberately steer his mount G'ne A Buzz in to the path of Wadsworth Lad, ridden by Luke Harvey, in the Hotstet Panacur Mares Novices' hurdle. The stewards found Dunwoody guilty of intentional interference and referred the incident to the London-based Jockey Club as it was his second technical riding offence of the season.

Obree sacked by French team

PARIS (AFP) — French cycling team Le Groupement have sacked Scottish former world champion Graeme Obree for failing to turn up to a pre-season training camp. Obree, signed last September, was expected at Carroz d'Arrache in the French Alps Sunday. "Obree didn't even call us to explain why," said team manager Guy Mollet. "His attitude is all wrong and this is unforgivable." Obree, 28, the world pursuit champion in 1993, was to make his debut in the professional ranks with the French team later this year.

Sauzee suspended by trainer

PARIS (R) — Franck Sauzee became the second French international to be suspended by his own club from this weekend's league matches when Strasbourg trainer Daniel Jeandupeux handed him a one-match ban. Jeandupeux accused Sauzee of throwing the ball at him during Tuesday's shock 2-0 League Cup defeat to second division side Perpignan and said he had a disruptive effect on the whole team. Sauzee, who has won 39 caps for France in defence and midfield, will sit out the match with St. Etienne. Earlier in the week, Paris St. Germain trainer Luis Fernandez suspended France goalkeeper Bernard Lama for one match because he reported back for training a day late after the Christmas and New Year break.

Two titles at stake in Texas

SAN ANTONIO (AFP) — Unbeaten U.S. fighter Kevin Kelley and veteran Wilfredo Vazquez of Puerto Rico defend world boxing in a championship doubleheader. Kelley, a Brooklyn southpaw, takes a 41-0 record with 29 knockouts into his third World Boxing Council featherweight title defense, this one against Mexico's Alejandro Gonzalez. Gonzalez has won 22 straight fights and has a 34-2 mark with 24 knockouts. Vazquez makes his ninth World Boxing Association junior featherweight title defense against Texan Orlando Canizales. Vazquez, who has held the crown for two years, has a 41-6 record that includes 32 knockouts. He has fought three draws. Canizales, who has won 28 straight fights, has a 38-1 record with one draw. He has recorded 29 knockouts. Canizales has made 16 straight title defenses of the International Boxing Federation bantamweight crown before moving up to a heavier class for this fight.

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠K642 ♠AQ62 ♠KQ3 ♠AS
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 NT Pass 2 ♠ Pass
2 ♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A.—With 16 points in high cards it makes no difference whether your range is 15-17 or 16-18, or that you were unable to find a major-suit fit. You have at least 33 and no more than 36 points in the combined holding. That's enough for a small slam and no more. Bid six trumps.

Q.2—North-South vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠AK10672 ♠A94 ♠652 ♠A
The bidding has proceeded:
West North East South
3 ♠ Pass
What action do you take?
A.—While you have a good hand, it does contain six losers. Despite the fact you might balance with less, we think a bid of three spades does the hand justice. Unless partner can raise, we doubt that you can make game.

Q.3—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠82 ♠10672 ♠AK4
The bidding has proceeded:
East South West North
Pass Pass 1 ♠ 2 ♠
4 ♠
What action do you take?
A.—Although you have two defensive tricks, your diamond length makes it possible that four spades will be unbeatable. However, a sacrifice should not be costly. On the way to five diamonds, though, bid

Q.4—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠8 ♠Q964 ♠Q854 ♠Q1096
Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond?
A.—Normally, we expect bidding your four-card suit up the line. Here, however, your holding and suits are weak and your hand is weak just one forward-going bid. We would opt for one heart, intending to correct one spade or one no trump to two clubs.

Q.5—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠A87 ♠AK976 ♠4 ♠AK84
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass
?
What action do you take?
A.—Even with a minimum response you could have game if partner's values are in the right place. Make a help-suit game try in the longer of the suits where a key holding is needed. Bid three clubs.

Q.6—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠AQ72 ♠J3 ♠KQ6 ♠AJ32
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1 NT Pass 3 ♠ Pass
?
What do you bid now?
A.—A raise to four spades does not do your hand justice. You have a maximum to trump and excellent support for partner's suit. To describe a hand that now has slam ambitions, make an advance commitment of four clubs.

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Raghdha & Farooq Al Fihawi in RAGHBAT		Julia Roberts/Nick Nolte in I Love Trouble Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		CONCORD '1' Sylvester Stallone/Sharon Stone... in THE SPECIALIST Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD '2' SLEEP WALKER Shows: 2:15, 5:15		will soon present: Mousa Hijazin (SUM'AA) In the satirical political comedy: Hi Citizen	Presents Abu Awwad In the social comedy Punctured Bag The theatre is closed on Mondays. Tickets are available all day	Presents: The political satire: Al Salam Ya Salam Daily at 8:30 Saturday & Sunday is the theatre's holiday. In English Sunday January 15, 1995

Sharaa urges Iran to support Syria in Mideast peace talks

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa on Saturday urged Iran and other Islamic states to support his country's stand in the Middle East peace process and its bid to regain territories seized by Israel.

Earlier he vowed that Iranian-backed guerrillas would keep up their attacks on Israeli troops in South Lebanon, the official agency IRNA said.

He told Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in talks here that Damascus "insists on restoring its full rights and freeing its lands occupied by Israel."

"We hope that Arab and Islamic countries would support Syria in its endeavour," he was quoted as saying in a statement sent from the president's office.

He said that Syria's "position is unchanged" in its talks with Israel which have been suspended since February and have deadlocked over the scope and timetable of an Israeli pullout from the strategic Golan Heights.

Mr. Sharaa, who arrived here Friday and met with his counterpart Ali Akbar

Velayati, also ruled out any peace with the Jewish state "without the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Golan Heights and South Lebanon," IRNA added.

He vowed the Lebanese resistance would "keep up its fight against the aggressor" as long as a border strip in the south of the country remained occupied.

"Referring to the Islamic resistance in South Lebanon, Sharaa said that the struggle against usurpers would continue as long as the Lebanese soil was under the Zionist occupation," IRNA said.

Syria, which maintains 35,000 troops across two thirds of Lebanon, is the country's main power broker.

IRNA said Mr. Velayati "underlined the role that the Islamic resistance played in South Lebanon and remarked that if Muslims sought to restore their rights they should adhere to Islamic principles."

Israeli troops in South Lebanon have come under increasing attacks by the Islamic Resistance, the military wing of the pro-Iranian Hiz-

bollah (Party of God) group. Hizbollah guerrillas have killed 21 Israeli soldiers and wounded scores during 1994.

Israel has responded by mounting repeated attacks on Hizbollah strongholds in South Lebanon.

The Iranian-backed movement Hizbollah spearheads anti-Israeli attacks in Lebanon, where around 30,000 Syrian troops are deployed.

The Syrian minister, who handed a message from Syrian President Hafez Al Assad to Mr. Rafsanjani, called for "friendly, deep-rooted" relations and pledged total "solidarity" with Iran.

Mr. Rafsanjani praised Syria for "speaking a fight against the Zionist regime, for insisting on its rightful positions and not succumbing to Israel's expansionism."

"Iran hopes for a growing support from all Islamic countries notably the Arabs for the rights of the Palestinians and other countries in the fight against the Israeli aggressors," Mr. Rafsanjani added.

The two leaders discussed

bilateral and regional issues, the Middle East peace process and the summit in the Egyptian city of Alexandria between Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in late December.

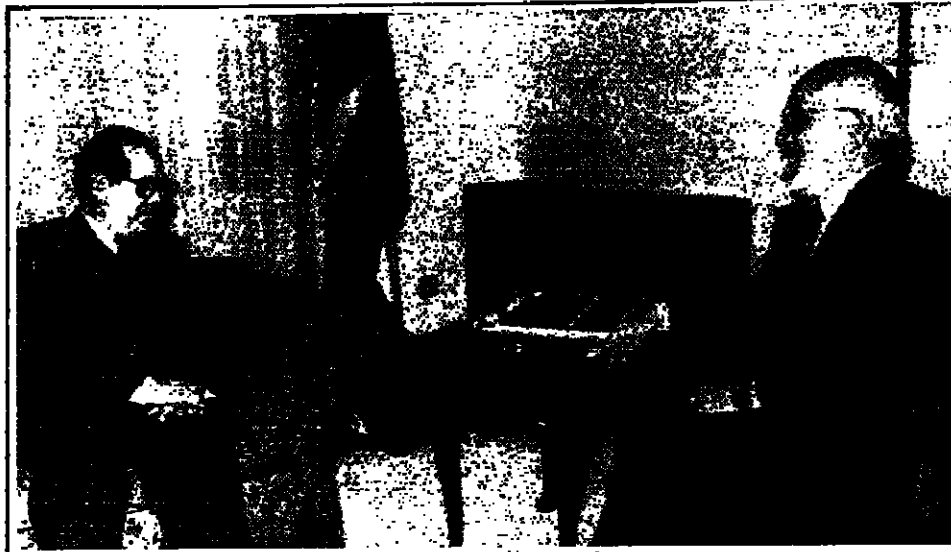
Arab diplomats said the main aim of Mr. Sharaa's visit was to brief Iran on the results of the summit.

"Syria is unhappy with the latest peace overtures coming from certain Arab states in the Gulf, so it is trying to play the cards of Iran, Egypt and even Iraq to pressure the monarchs not to act solo," one diplomat said.

Mr. Sharaa criticised "certain Arab states" for their "solitary march" to make "bilateral peace with Israel and opening their door" to the Jewish state.

While "Muslim countries, notably Iran and Syria, are constantly targeted by the enemy," Israel and "its allies are trying to take advantage of the lack of unity in the Islamic World," he said.

Israel is "trying hard to expand its influence in the region," said the Syrian foreign minister.



U.N. INVITATION: His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday received an invitation from the United Nations Secretary General Boutros Ghali to participate in a U.N. summit which will be held in Copenhagen March 6-12. The invitation was delivered to the King by Ali Batros Ghali, a representative of the U.N. secretariat, at a meeting held at the Royal Palace in Amman. The meeting was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Hamzah Bin Al Hussein (Petra photo).

Western diplomats ignore Algerian group's ultimatum

PARIS (R) — Western diplomats in Algeria on Saturday apparently ignored an Algerian group's death threat as a deadline for them to leave the country or face death expired.

France and Britain said their embassies in Algiers were open as usual and Germany has said it will not close its mission.

The Algerian government, casting doubts on the authenticity of the threat, said diplomats were well protected. Its envoy to Bonn, Mohammed Hanache, praised the decision to keep embassies open and not give in to threats as "sensible and courageous."

There were no reports of attacks on foreigners but in a grim reminder of the three-year violence that has killed up to 30,000 people in the country, an Algerian radio journalist died in hospital of bullet wounds suffered on Friday.

Abdoud, shot in an Algiers suburb, was the 29th Algerian journalist killed by suspected Islamic guerrillas.

Abdoud, 38, the deputy editor of the Arabic-language "Chaine 1" radio network, was attacked in Birkhadem, on the outskirts of Algiers, a colleague at his radio station said. He died at a military hospital in Ain Naadja.

In another attack Friday, suspected Islamic militants shot dead a reporter for the country's largest French-language daily, Zineddine Aliou Salah, 35, of the French-language daily Liberte, was killed near his house in the Khazrouma neighborhood of Algiers, his newspaper said.

The two were the 28th and 29th Algerian journalists killed by Islamic militants since May 1992, according to a count by the French independent organisation Reporters Without Borders, which estimated that another 200 had fled their country.

Out of those, some 25 journalists have been killed since May 1993.

Among them, Said Mekbel, the editor of the French-language Le Matin daily, was shot dead in Algiers on Dec. 3 last year in an attack claimed by the radical Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

The threat against Western embassies, purported to come from the GIA, Algeria's most violent rebel organisation, said diplomats from several Western countries including Britain, France, Germany and the United States would be killed in cold blood if they had not left Algeria by Jan. 7.

Most Western embassies have cut down their staff in the face of worsening civil strife which developed after the Algerian government cancelled 1992 elections that the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

Countries such as Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Denmark had closed down their missions before the latest threat.

A spokeswoman for the German foreign ministry said security experts had met on Friday in Paris to coordinate security between European Union countries represented in Algiers.

She said they traded information but took no decisions.

Paris, the former colonial power and the current president of the EU, had no comment. The foreign ministry would not even confirm the meeting had taken place.

The French government has said it would send experts to Algiers to review security for its diplomatic and consular staff and airport security following the Dec. 24 hijacking of a French airliner.

Paris has ordered French companies to suspend sea and air links with Algeria until security is tightened.

Diplomatic sources said one possible solution would be to gather Western diplomats into a single compound.

Several embassies have already brought in their own military to replace Algerian security guards for fear they would be infiltrated by guerrillas.

Algerian Interior Minister Abdul Rahman Meziane-Cherif dismissed the threat and said embassies were well protected.

"I don't think it important or useful... to rack our brains too much about this issue," he told reporters. "Algeria long ago took the necessary measures to guarantee the property and security of diplomatic personnel."

Casting doubts on the authenticity of the threat which came to some embassies in German unlike previous GIA statements, he said it could have come from "manipulators who don't belong to terrorist groups" or "people out for revenge."

French secret services say they fear more attacks on French targets in Algeria or abroad, after French police killed the four GIA hijackers who had flown an air France plane to Marseille.

France is the prime foreign target of Islamists who accuse it of propping up the Algerian government with financial and military support.

Of 76 foreigners killed in Algeria since the GIA ordered foreigners out of the country over a year ago, 26 were French — four of them members of the embassy or consulate staff.

Arab League regrets Iranian court on island

CAIRO (Agencies) — The Arab League said on Saturday it regretted Iran's inauguration of a courthouse on the Gulf island of Abu Musa, which is at the centre of a territorial row with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The 22-nation league renewed its call to Iran to take the dispute to the International Court of Justice for arbitration.

"The new Iranian action is extremely regrettable because it embodies the illegal aggression Iran undertook in 1971 by occupying the three islands that belong to the Emirates," Adnan Omran, assistant secretary-general of the Arab League, told reporters.

Iran inaugurated the courthouse on Abu Musa on Friday, strengthening the presence of its state institutions on the Gulf island, which it has been running jointly with UAE member Sharjah under a 1971 deal.

Iran has said its sovereignty over Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunbs is non-negotiable and any "misunderstandings" should be discussed bilaterally.

Mr. Omran said Iran's latest action was in opposition to "constructive efforts" by the UAE and the Arab League to find a solution to "end the Iranian occupation of the Arab islands."

"We renew the call to Iran to accept going to the International Court of Justice with the aim of solving the dispute over the three islands in a legal way," he added.

Iranian sources said Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi inaugurated the tribunal on Abu Musa on Friday in a ceremony attended by local officials.

Iranian authorities said last month that a revolutionary court would also be set up on the southern Gulf island as part of efforts to reform the country's penal system.

Revolutionary courts were created after the 1979 Islamic revolution to try major offences.

Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb were all taken over by Tehran in 1971 after the withdrawal of British troops from the Gulf.

Perry assures Egypt of aid

CAIRO (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry vowed here Saturday that his country would keep up its level of military aid to Egypt in 1996, despite the peace process in the Middle East.

"I told President (Hosni) Mubarak that President (Bill) Clinton has put into his budget that he is going to submit to Congress in a few weeks the same level of aid for the coming fiscal year," he said after talks with Egypt's leader.

Our president has already made that commitment," Mr. Perry told journalists at the start of a tour of Egypt and Israel.

"I believe we will be successful in maintaining the aid level," Mr. Perry said, adding that he and Secretary of State Warren Christopher were "committed to defend it and to defend it vigorously in the Congress."

Washington provides \$1.3 billion in annual military aid to Cairo.

Mr. Perry stressed "the strong relationship between Egypt and the United States." The main aim of his visit was "strengthening and deepening the cooperative defence relationship," he said.

The secretary praised Egypt, which in 1979 became the first Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel, for its efforts to secure peace in

the Middle East, saying it had "played a bold and important role."

Asked why military aid was still running high at a time when peace was taking shape in the region, he recalled the crisis in October after an Iraqi troop buildup near the Kuwaiti border and U.S. forces were deployed.

The crisis was resolved, after the Iraqis pulled back, "without the deployment of Egyptian forces but it could very well have required a deployment of Egyptian forces had that turned into a war," he said.

Last week's summit in Egypt between Mr. Mubarak, Syrian President Hafez Al Assad and Saudi King Fahd also showed Cairo was continuing efforts to push the peace process forward," he said.

"Egypt is a source of stability and moderation in the Middle East," the defence secretary added.

Despite the strong relationship, Mr. Mubarak acknowledged on Jan. 1 that the two countries had problems. "There are certain differences but that is usual between states and friends," he said.

Mr. Mubarak blamed U.S. press reports which charged Egypt had ousted U.N. sanctions imposed on neighbouring Libya in connection with the December 1988 Locker-

bie plane bombing.

During the Saudi-Egyptian-Syrian summit, Egypt's press hit back by accusing Washington of trying to sideline Cairo and ensure Israeli domination of the Middle East.

Mr. Perry was also to meet his Egyptian counterpart, General Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, for talks on assembling M1-A1 tanks in Egypt. On Sunday, he is to travel on to Israel, before heading for Pakistan and India.

On Egypt's campaign to make Israel join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, he said: "The U.S. regards the extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as important not just for the region but for the whole world."

Turning to U.S. newspaper reports that Israel was transferring U.S. defence technology to China, Mr. Perry said: "I do plan to discuss them when I am in Israel. But now I cannot confirm those reports."

The Los Angeles Times reported that Israel helped China develop and produce a new fighter jet with technology developed for the Lavi jet fighter, a U.S.-Israeli project abandoned in 1987.

"If it turns out to be accurate, we will have some difficult words with the Israeli government," the defence secretary said earlier this week.

U.N. officials fear any fresh clan fighting would hamper the withdrawal of the 9,000 U.N. troops still in Somalia; but say they do not expect the force to be deliberately attacked.

Clan leaders signed a ceasefire agreement on Wednesday but sporadic fighting has persisted between Mr. Ali Mahdi nor Mursade militia chief Mohammed Kanyare Afrah attended the signing.

Mr. Afrah launched a bitter attack on Mr. Ali Mahdi Friday afternoon, accusing him of hampering the efforts by elders to pacify the sub-clans and of being an "agent" of late dictator Mohammed Siad Barre, who died in Nigeria on Monday.

North Mogadishu radio claimed Friday that the ceasefire agreement included the implementation of the harsh Muslim Sharia law in Bermoda, but Mr. Afrah said: "It is too difficult to implement Sharia law or any other kind of justice without a central authority."

He accused Mr. Ali Mahdi of "mixing politics with religion for his own interest."

Mr. Ali Mahdi introduced Sharia law in north Mogadishu last year, but it is not in effect in the south.

He described the fighting in south Mogadishu as being between militias of his own Somali Salvation Alliance and Gen. Aided's Somali National Alliance.

The U.N. has a base in the fortified and heavily-guarded university compound in south Mogadishu but is relocating to areas near the seaport and airport in mid-January before a total pullout in March.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Former Sudanese commissioner jailed

KHARTOUM (R) — A Sudanese court on Saturday sentenced a former provincial commissioner to seven years in jail and fined him 34 million Sudanese pounds (\$83,000) for embezzlement. Ali Abdullah Al Nebela was charged with misappropriating some 37 million pounds (\$90,000) when he was commissioner of Galabat province in eastern Sudan earlier this year. Mr. Nebela, who denied the charges, was the first senior official to serve under the government of Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Al Bashir to be convicted of corruption.

Man goes on holiday with stolen \$150,000

KUWAIT (R) — An Indian security man working for a money delivery firm in Kuwait stole 46,000 dinars (\$153,800) which he was supposed to deposit in the bank and then confessed to the crime by fax, a newspaper reported on Saturday. The Arab Times said the employee swapped the money, which belonged to the Ministry of Communications, for blank paper then went on annual leave. After arriving in India he "briefed the company by fax on the details of the crime he had committed," the paper said.

Sudan denies expelling Eritrean refugees

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan on Saturday denied accusations by Eritrea that it had mistreated and expelled Eritrean refugees. Hisan Al Ghabshawi, Sudan's commissioner for refugees, was quoted by the official news agency SUNA as saying that voluntary repatriation of refugees was going ahead as agreed with the United Nations and representatives from Eritrea. Sudan has over one million refugees on its territory, most from Eritrea and Ethiopia. Last month Sudan said that only 5,000 Eritreans had returned under the voluntary programme. Eritrea severed diplomatic ties with Sudan in December, accusing Khartoum of training fundamentalist rebels and Eritrean insurgents.

Policeman shot by suspected Islamist in Egypt

ASSIUT (R) — A suspected Muslim militant shot and wounded a police officer who was chasing him in southern Egypt on Saturday, security sources said. They said the gunman shot Mostafa Yusef Hamdi in the thigh during a chase near the southern town of Samalout in Minya province and escaped. Police officials in Minya said the policeman was in good condition. They believe the gunman is a member of the militant organisation Gamaa Al Islamiyah, which targets policemen in the south as part of its campaign to overthrow the Egyptian government and set up a strict Islamic state. The Gamaa shot dead 12 people, including nine policemen, in southern Egypt in the first two days of this year.

World Muslim meeting starts in Bangladesh

TONGI, Bangladesh (AFP) — Hundreds of thousands of Muslims poured into this small industrial town Saturday as the Biswa Ijtema — the World Muslim Congregation — got under way. The three-day event, the second in importance in the Islamic religion after the Haj in Mecca, was expected to bring together 1.5 million Muslims, said the organisers, the Tablig Jamaat. They said the number of devotees was increasing each year. "There are participants from at least 25 countries, including from Europe, the United States and Middle East," said one organiser in Tongi, 15 kilometres north of the capital Dhaka. Bangladesh President Abdul Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and main opposition leader Sheikh Hasina Wajed greeted the faithful in separate statements, wishing success to the congregation. They urged the participants to pray for a united, strong and peaceful Islamic World. More than 86 per cent of Bangladesh's 110 million people are Muslims.

50-year-old gives birth to 17th child

TEHRAN (R) — A 50-year-old Iranian woman has been giving birth to a baby a year for the past 18 years, the Iranian newspaper Kar-va-Kargar reported on Saturday. It said the woman was in good health and happy about the delivery of her 17th child, just as her oldest son turned 18 and was ready for military service. "Obviously the couple has done nothing to prevent pregnancy," the paper said.

Geagea meets new lawyers in court

BEIRUT (AFP) — Former Christian warlord Samir Geagea met his court-appointed team of lawyers for the first time Saturday as a trial into a church bombing resumed here. Judge Philippe Khairallah adjourned the hearing for 30 minutes to allow the meeting to take place during which Mr. Geagea delivered "information vitally important for the defence," the lawyers said. But the court then refused a defence request for a 48-hour adjournment to enable them to hold further talks and began to read out charges against Mr. Geagea and witness statements. Mr. Geagea is accused of killing Christian leader Dany Chamoun and his family in 1990 and of bombing a church last February in an attack which killed 11 people and wounded more than 50 others. The charges have been split into two separate trials, and the hearing into the murder of Chamoun resumed Friday.

COLUMN

Man held after sexually abusing boy on jet

NEW YORK (R) — Police arrested a 51-year-old man at John F. Kennedy Airport after a teenager boy claimed the man sodomised and sexually abused him on a flight from Argentina. The boy said he was asleep on an Aerolineas Argentinas Airbus A-310 when Guillermo Delarosa of New York City, allegedly sexually abused him about three hours into the flight from Buenos Aires, according to John Kampfe, a port authority spokesman said. The name of the 16-year-old boy was not released. "A fist fight broke out on the plane when the teenager tried to fend off Delarosa's alleged assaults," the spokesman added. Another port authority spokesman, Tom Midonich, said the investigation found that the man "had performed oral sex on the boy... the fight resulted when the boy woke up and started punching the man." Police were waiting for the jet when it landed at 8:30 a.m. EST (1330 GMT) after they were alerted by the JFK tower, he said. Mr. Delarosa was handed over to FBI agents who arrested him, Mr. Kampfe said. Mr. Delarosa, who is charged with sexual abuse, pleaded not guilty in U.S. District Court in Brooklyn late Friday. He was released on bail and faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted, a government spokeswoman said.

Former diplomat fined for shoplifting

CHAPEL HILL, North Carolina (AFP) — A former top U.S. diplomat in Austria pleaded guilty here Friday to stealing goods worth \$21 from a drugstore in Chapel Hill. Felix Bloch, former number two at the U.S. embassy in Vienna, was given a suspended 30-day prison sentence and fined \$100. Mr. Bloch shot to international prominence in 1989 when, as a 5-year-old career diplomat, he became the subject of an intensive FBI investigation into allegations that he had spied for the Soviet Union while serving as deputy chief of the U.S. embassy in Vienna from 1983 to 1987. He strenuously denied passing classified information to the Russians however, and the U.S. government eventually decided there was insufficient evidence to indict him on espionage charges. He was dismissed from the State Department in November 1990 for allegedly making "deliberate false statements or misrepresentations to the FBI" (Federal Bureau of Investigation).

Wall Street Journal launches sports page

NEW YORK (AFP) — The authoritative daily Wall Street Journal launched a new weekly sports page that was expected to lead to a new weekend section on leisure. The new pages were designed to give an added attraction to the newspaper, known for its business and economic news, said weekend editor Lee Lascase. As of February, a new travel page was to be inserted in the Friday edition as the second step towards publishing the full leisure section. The Wall Street Journal has published a weekly sports page during the Olympic Games in the past two years and during the 1994 World Cup which Mr. Lascase said received a positive response from readers.

Thai police raid Patpong Bar

BANGKOK (AFP) — Thai police raided a bar in Bangkok's Patpong nightlife district and arrested 20 female dancers, including four below the legal age of 18, a social worker said Saturday. The girls, three aged 17 and one 15, were turned over to the Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights (CPCR), a child-abuse watch group. CPCR's Vasana Kaonopparat told AFP, adding that the girls said they had voluntarily worked at the bar for quite some time. Ten policemen and several workers posing as patrons Thursday visited the Penthouse Bar and found it was staging illegal sex shows. Police earlier had received an anonymous letter saying the bar employed underage girls.